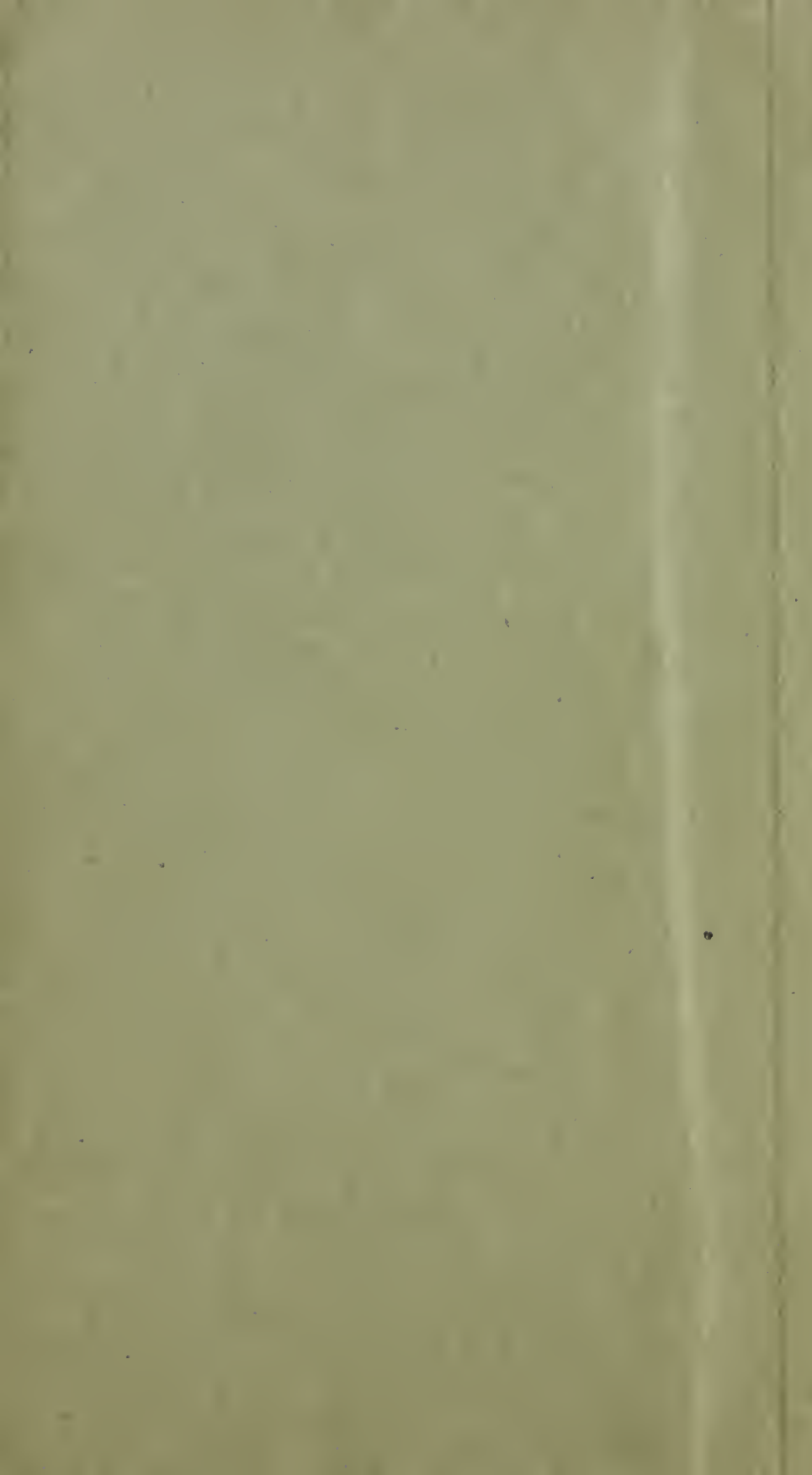


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THE THREE QUESTIONS:

WHAT AM I?

WHENCE CAME I?

WHITHER DO I GO?

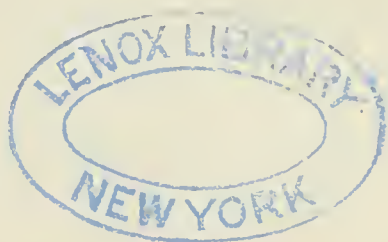
By William Henry Channing

“What is this world? a dream within a dream; as we grow older each step is an awakening. The youth awakes as he thinks from childhood:—The full-grown man despises the pursuits of youth as visionary:—The old man looks on manhood as a feverish dream. Is the grave, then, the last sleep? Ah, no! It is the last and final awakening.”

LOCKHART'S, LIFE OF SCOTT

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P R E F A C E .



THE "Three Questions," which form the title of this little volume, involve, it will be readily admitted, the most momentous subjects of inquiry on which the human mind can be occupied. At no period of life can they be regarded with indifference. Even in childhood, faint and broken glimpses of them steal upon the dawning reason. They mingle with the golden visions of youth, and the soberer speculations of manhood. Old age, too, indifferent to all other inquiries that once gave interest, finds itself still tremblingly alive to these. In the following pages, an attempt has been made to delineate the process by which a mind, at one time involved in the mazes of scepticism, succeeded, after an anxious search, in obtaining a satisfactory reply to these questions. Many still wander in the fatal labyrinth from which

the writer trusts he has escaped, and to such he dedicates his labours, in the hope that a clue (however frail and slender) may thereby be supplied to some unhappy wanderer, by which he may thread his way out of the devious and winding path into which he has strayed.

To the numbers of young men in the present day, who, if not avowedly sceptical, are yet wavering and undecided in their religious opinions, this attempt to do good will, it is hoped, prove useful. The heart of many a parent is wrung with sorrow at beholding some member of his family, once full of promise, becoming gradually tainted with the deadly leaven of scepticism, and in due time producing those baneful fruits which are its necessary results. Almost every one will, in his own immediate circle, be able to recollect some melancholy case of this kind. It has been the wish of the writer to produce a work, which should be fitted to be placed in the hands of such persons. In the present volume he has endeavoured to accomplish that object, by presenting in detail the leading truths of religion, in the order in which they struck his own mind. Acquainted from experience with the peculiar difficulties of the class whom he

addresses, he has tried, by adopting a tone of kindness, to win his way to their affections as well as to their understandings. He has at the same time endeavoured to render his mode of writing in some degree attractive, in order, if possible, to evade the charge which is frequently brought against religious works, of their being composed in a dry and uninteresting manner. He trusts, too, that what he shall advance will fall with more weight upon the reader, from the fact of the author's views having at one time been directly opposed to those which he now advocates, and being more likely therefore to be the result, not simply of early prejudice, but of mature conviction.

The mode which the author has pursued in working out his design, will be best collected by the reader as he proceeds in the perusal of the volume. He would, therefore, only add, that he has not so much aimed at producing a religious treatise, as an introduction to such treatises, and an incitement, as it were, to their perusal. Although adapted, also, for young men in the first instance, it is trusted that the work will be found applicable to other classes of readers.

For any inaccuracies of style, or defects

of arrangement, the author must solicit the indulgence of the reader, the volume having been composed at intervals of professional leisure, and under circumstances unfavourable to rigid accuracy of revision.

THE THREE QUESTIONS.

CHAPTER I.

“The soul, at times, in silence of the night,
Has flashes—transient intervals of light;
When things to come, without a shade of doubt,
In dread reality stand fully out.
Those lucid moments suddenly present
Glances of truth, as though the heavens were rent
And through the chasm of celestial light,
The future breaks upon the startled sight.
Life’s vain pursuits, and time’s advancing pace,
Appear with death-bed clearness, face to face,
And immortality’s expanse sublime
In just proportion to the speck of time;
Whilst death, uprising from the silent shade,
Shows his dark outline, ere the vision fade;
In strong relief, against the blazing sky,
Appears the shadow, as it passes by;
And, though o’erwhelming to the dazzled brain,
These are the moments when the mind is sane.”

JANE TAYLOR.

THERE are few individuals who will not in the language which we have selected as the motto for our title-page, recognise a train of thought which has at some time, and in some shape or other, passed through their own minds. The languages of all nations attest the proneness of mankind to indulge in such

reflections upon human life, and whether we examine the proverbs of an unlettered race, or the poetical similies of a polished one, we shall find them alike teeming with similar illustrations of the brevity, the vanity, and the uncertainty of existence, drawn from every object in nature, which can express fragility and decay. Absorbed as we are all apt to be, indeed, in the business or pleasures of life, there are moments in our experience, when the thoughts of futurity will flash upon us with appalling vividness, and when the questions "WHAT AM I? WHENCE CAME I? WHITHER DO I GO?" will demand an answer. Few things are more astonishing, however, than the ease and celerity with which such reflections are dismissed from the mind, and the little attention paid by the generality of our race, to the practical results which ought to flow from them. The most opposite effect might have been expected to be produced, by even the most transitory glance at the curious nature of our position in the universe. We find ourselves brought into existence, without any wish upon our own part. We discover that we are not alone in this position, but that millions of beings are in a similar one; that myriads have shared the same nature before us; and that after we have fretted our brief hour upon life's stage, other myriads will, to all reasonable appearance, follow in our train. We are totally unable to explain, why we appeared no sooner or no later; why we were born in one part of

our globe, and not upon another, although our happiness and misery are in many cases fixed by causes like these. The speculations of philosophy and science, prove alike unequal to the solution of these problems. The inability of the former is best shown by the countless theories which it has paraded upon the subject, and which have passed in rapid succession into oblivion, while the glass of science, instead of throwing light upon the mystery, serves only, on the present occasion, to deepen our gloom and perplexity. It discovers to us, indeed, by the telescope, worlds, suns, and systems, scattered in the firmament like sand upon the sea shore, and reveals by the microscope, in the minuter objects around us, a vast system of life, stretching as much *below* the grasp of our faculties, as the other subject soared *above* them. The veil which hangs over our moral being however, it can render us no assistance in raising.

Were the terms upon which human life is held, indeed, those of perfect happiness, and were it evident, that our Creator in framing the fabric of society, had intended that his creatures should here enjoy uninterrupted pleasure, there might be some apology for the indifference, with which mankind regard these important questions. The tenure of human existence is, alas! however, of a widely different character. Abounding as the world does in marks of benevolent contrivance, and in sources of overflowing enjoyment, a system of pain and suffering is but

too evidently interwoven with the whole creation. At the present hour, the vast majority of our race are shrouded in the gloomy pall of heathen superstition, but little removed above the lower animals in point of intelligence, and still less so with regard to morals. Drawing near to more polished shores, we shall still find the term *war* in the dictionary of every civilized nation. Inquiring what it means, we shall learn that it refers to a state in which man employs his noblest intellectual powers, in devising methods for reducing multitudes of his fellow-creatures to a painful and agonizing death. Confining our glance to another range, we cannot wander through the most pastoral of our districts, so often represented as the abodes of innocence and peace, without finding a prison. We discover too, hospitals, and recollect not without a feeling of apprehension, that our feeble frame has some hundreds of diseases attached to it; that it may be prostrated by a thousand accidents; and that even our most impalpable and ethereal part is not free from disarrangement, but that its powers may be destroyed by a host of maladies, from the capricious feelings of the unhappy hypochondriac, to

“Gloomy madness laughing wild
Amidst severest wo.”

Well might an eloquent writer exclaim
“When and where have the cries of misery

ceased to resound? The groans of suffering have echoed from California to Japan. The stream of sorrow has flowed without interruption for six thousand years. On all the public concerns of man, on every nation, on every age, has been labelled ‘Lamentation, mourning, and wo!’ ”

The anxiety which must arise in every reflecting mind, respecting the nature of our existence here, which is not lessened on a sober review of facts, like those given above, is considerably heightened by the opinion which has been common to every age, that this is not the only state of our being, but that we are destined after death to pass into another. We are led naturally therefore to inquire, whether there be any mode of discovering the character of this future life; whether the pain which abounds here will also accompany us there; and to what extent the pleasures which are so profusely distributed here will be enjoyed in such a state. If, however, the voice of nature throw so little light upon the character of the existence here, still more palpable is the darkness in which it envelopes that of the existence hereafter. One fact is, at all events, displayed with appalling certainty, that the entrance to these unknown regions must be through the gloomy portals of the tomb. In vain, however, do we attempt to strain our vision further;—at this point the prospect terminates.

The feelings of our race, while musing on this subject, have been but too well described

in the following lines, by the great poet of English literature :—

“Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
 To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
 To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence round about
 The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
 Of those, that lawless and incertain thoughts
 Imagine howling!—’tis too horrible!
 The weariest and most loathed worldly life
 That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment,
 Can lay on nature, is a paradise
 To what we fear of death.”

Must we, then, remain in this state of uncertainty, upon a subject so vital and important? Must we, as another poet has suggested, “Humbly wait the great teacher, Death?” May his instructions, alas! not arrive too late? Is there no chart to guide us across the unknown ocean of eternity, to which we are so fast approaching? Let us awake from this lethargy. The surge of that vast ocean will soon begin to sound more distinctly upon the ear. Innumerable barks that started in company with us upon the voyage of life have already disappeared. Our own must soon prepare to follow. Must we abandon hope? Is there no chart to be found?

CHAPTER II.

“Most wondrous book!
 Star of eternity—the only star
 By which the bark of man could navigate
 The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss
 Securely”

POLLOK'S "COURSE OF TIME,"

THERE have been many such charts as that which we sought for in the last chapter offered to the world, each claiming to be a safe guide through the unknown ocean which lies before us, and each recommended for our adoption by the examples of millions of our fellow-creatures, who have launched upon the track which they delineated with blind unhesitating confidence. The Mahometan sails by the Koran; the Brahmin by the records of Vishnu; the Persian by the legends of Zoroaster; and the Chinese by the maxims of Confucius. Each of these so widely differs however from the others—each contains so many gross and shocking absurdities, and all alike so much claim to be the revelation of a supernatural power, without offering any satisfactory credentials to establish their conflicting pretensions, that it were but waste of time to investigate their claims to credibility. Must we, then, seeing that so many false charts exist, conclude at once, as

some bold speculators have done, that no genuine one can be found? Shall we act more wisely by enjoying the brief moments which life affords, undisturbed by such perplexing inquiries, leaving the issue to chance, or at the utmost blindly following the guide to which the generality of the friends around us adhere? Millions of our fellow-creatures, in every age, have shown their approbation of this plan by acting upon it, and it may perhaps be considered as of all others the most popular. There is, however, still another chart to which we have not adverted, but before examining its nature, let us briefly run over the leading features of the evidences which it exhibits as its claims on our belief.

Viewing the subject then generally, we shall be struck with the peculiar circumstances under which the volume containing the chart in question has been composed. We shall find a considerable portion of it to have existed in the most primeval period of society, and the remainder to have been produced at intervals during a long series of ages, the whole harmonizing, however, with such curious felicity in style, sentiment, matter and mode of treatment, that we shall in vain look in any language for a work composed in a similar manner. As regards its genuineness, we shall not only discover that it possesses the marks by which the collector of manuscripts tests the classic writings of antiquity, but that owing to its having excited in a powerful manner the passions and in-

terests of the human race, it has been preserved with a jealous scrupulosity, which renders the possibility of its having been tampered with, a matter of the utmost improbability. We shall further discover that whether false or true, still such has been the interest attached to this volume, that it has in every age “engaged the attention, and enforced the conviction of men the most eminent for their freedom from prejudice, and the most distinguished for their attainments in every branch of literature and science:” that believers in it have not been confined to one class or profession, but that, to adopt a hackneyed mode of illustration, men the most eminent for their attainments in mental philosophy, like Locke—the most profound mathematicians, like Euler—individuals who have made the greatest discoveries in the natural world, like Newton—the most illustrious statesmen, like Clarendon—the most acute jurists, like Hale—the most sublime poets, like Milton—the most learned professors of the healing art, like Haller—the most distinguished philanthropists, like Wilberforce—the most unwearied philologists, like Jones; that in a word without increasing our catalogue unnecessarily, the most eminent men of all classes, of all professions, and of all ages, have declared their convictions of the truth of this volume, after “grave deliberation, and the assiduous use of all the means of inquiry.” We shall discover, that, unlike other pretended revelations, it has not

imposed maledictions on the rash offender who should venture to inquire into its claims to truth, but that it has courted investigation, and even demanded it as a duty. We shall find that its precepts are adapted to the peculiarities of all countries and climates, unlike, in this respect, the *local* religion, if it may be so called, of the Koran, which, however suitable to the warm climate of the east, would prove utterly unfitted for the frigid regions of the north. We shall perceive that it bears the most close and exact analogy to the system of external nature, so much so, indeed, that it is hardly possible, when this argument is viewed aright, to resist the conviction that they are both emanations from the same creative hand. We shall in conclusion, be struck with the fact, that every mode of illustration and argument has been applied to test its truth; that chapter has been compared with chapter, verse with verse, line with line; and that after having endured the most rigid examination to which human composition was ever subjected, it remains in the same commanding position it occupied before these inquiries and investigations commenced. On proceeding further to open this volume and examine its contents, we shall find that it professes to give us an account of the origin of the human race, and of its true position amidst the discordant elements mentioned in the preceding chapter; that it explains the cause of our misery, and offers a sure and certain remedy for it; that it claims to be the

direct revelation of the Supreme Being; that it gives us a clear view of his nature and attributes, so far as that knowledge is necessary to our happiness; and that as proofs of its authority to make these declarations, it points to a wonderful succession of type, prophecy, and miracle, the truth of which has been tested by the many classes of distinguished individuals above enumerated.

Such is but a brief outline of the credentials which the Holy Scriptures (for of these remarkable writings it will be perceived we have been speaking,) exhibit, and it might have been thought that after evidence so varied had been produced, a cordial recognition of their claims as the true chart for eternity could scarcely have failed to follow. Experience, however, has taught us a melancholy lesson to the contrary, and proved that something more is requisite to win men to the reception of Christianity, than merely to enumerate its evidences. The scales in which these evidences will be weighed are coated with the rusts of prejudice, they must be cleansed;—depressed by the false weight of sinful pleasure,—the joys of religion must be thrown into the opposite balance; in this manner we may entertain hopes of elevating the unduly lowered beam. A brief notice of the advantages which Christianity proffers to us, seems therefore not entirely out of place at the present stage of our work.

CHAPTER III.

“In her right hand she holds to view
 A length of happy days ;
 Riches with splendid honours joined
 Are what her left displays.

According as her labours rise,
 So her rewards increase ;
 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
 And all her paths are peace.”

IN briefly adverting to the influence, which the precepts, the promises, and the consolations of Scripture are calculated to exert upon individual happiness, (for to that branch of the subject we must confine ourselves,) we observe in the outset, that Christianity imparts to its followers that prudent mental constitution, upon which perhaps, more than on any external advantages, real happiness depends. It adjusts, as a celebrated writer* has well observed, the habits in such a manner, that every alteration in them is rendered a change for the better. Such is the force of this principle of habit, that it was scarcely an exaggeration of the same ingenious author to assert, that, after their first impressions have been blunted, the epicure receives no more gratification from his expensive indulgences,

* Paley.

than the peasant from his simple fare ; and the man of pleasure no greater satisfaction in the midst of his brilliant circle, than the person of retired habits at his chimney-corner. For a time the amount of pleasure enjoyed by the respective parties is pretty much alike. Every time, however, the peasant and person of retired habits change their mode of life, they find a treat ; whereas the epicure, unless magnificently entertained, is disgusted whenever he leaves his own table, and the man of gaiety miserable, every time he finds himself alone. From these examples, therefore, (and they might be infinitely diversified,) we deduce the conclusion that quiet habits of life, and simple pleasures, so far from being tame and insipid, are more consistent with true happiness than the exciting round of gratifications in which mankind have been generally accustomed to seek for enjoyment. The prudent observer can scarcely fail to perceive with what advantages over their worldly competitors Christianity, from its undeniable tendency to impart a relish for simple pursuits and pleasures, enables its followers to start in the race for happiness.

To appeal to advantages, however, of a more palpable kind, Christianity we next observe is conducive to the moderate acquisition of wealth, or to speak more correctly, to a fair and reasonable degree of success in the prosecution of the avocations of life. Where its followers occupy leading situations in business pursuits, it is favourable in an emi-

nent degree to the production of those prudent, persevering, and industrious habits which seldom fail ultimately to be attended with prosperous results. Where religious principles exist in persons engaged in subordinate capacities, their tendency is to produce that rigid honesty and conscientious discharge of duty which naturally procure the attachment and esteem of the employers. In all cases the influence of the precepts of Christianity exempts the party whom they regulate, from the thralldom of those countless modes of expenditure on frivolous amusements or expensive fashions, which waste the income of the mere worldling. It is by no means, also, the least sweetener of the good man's success, that conscience smiles upon his acquisitions, and that his heart is opened to feel the blessedness of imparting to others a portion of the bounties which he has received.

If in contrast with solid advantages like these, we place the perpetual uneasiness which springs from embarrassed circumstances; the splendid misery of keeping up imposing appearances, without the means of properly supporting them; the cares, the distresses, the losses, the sordid avaricious habits, and above all the clamours of an offended conscience demanding restitution which but too frequently follow the most successful worldly enterprises, we cannot fail to acquiesce in the truth of the Divine declaration, "In the house of the righteous is much trea-

sure; but in the revenue of the wicked is trouble.”

Christianity we next observe is conducive to the preservation of health. Physicians have assured us that the majority of diseases with which mankind are afflicted may be traced to the irregular indulgence of the appetites, and that the number of our species who fall victims to these causes is greater than that destroyed by the combined ravages of the most sanguinary wars that have depopulated our race. Christianity, however, by imposing a salutary and judicious restraint upon the inferior propensities, effectually secures its followers from their attendant evils, while it heightens by temperance the enjoyment of all the natural bounties of Providence. The absence in a great measure too, of the distracting cares and corroding passions which embitter the existence of so large a class of mankind, combined with quiet and regular habits of living, give the Christian advantages in the preservation of health above almost every other class of men. Not the least blessing of Christianity indeed, in connexion with this part of the subject, is the unintermitted mental employment which the work of salvation affords. The true Christian has no *ennui*. He is a stranger to all the varied wretchedness of an “active, aimless, miserable mind.” The great work in which he is engaged is a constant incentive to action, and furnishes him with what has been well termed the secret of happiness, “a

constant employment for a desirable end, with a sense of continual progress.”

To the young and the thoughtless, who have never felt the loss of health, the value of this common-place blessing may appear less precious; the aged and the infirm, however, will appreciate it more wisely. In contrast with the operation of Christianity in preserving, we have only for a moment to place the opposite influence of vice in destroying, health. Whoever calmly pursues this train of thought, and considers the pain, the sickness, the operations of surgery, and the varied host of mental and bodily afflictions, which more or less directly follow the irregular indulgence of our appetites, will see that the whole analogy of nature falls in with the language of Scripture on this subject, “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Let him depart from evil and do good,—length of days, long life, and peace, shall it add to him.”

Christianity, we may again observe, leads to esteem and honour.

The desire of the applause of our fellow-creatures, a principle so universally diffused over all classes of mankind, as to have been styled the universal passion, might have been expected to have been viewed with, at least, complacency in the Christian system. It is no small proof, therefore, of its heavenly origin, that, contrary to all other schools of philosophy, it has placed itself in direct oppo-

sition to this versatile principle, and prescribed to its followers an almost total indifference to human applause as a spring of action, directing their aspirations to the only true source of excellence, the approbation of the supreme Being. Whilst it everywhere, however, labours to extirpate the inordinate desire of human estimation, it has not entirely overlooked the advantages derivable from the modified indulgence of this principle, but has wisely so ordered matters, that a systematic regard to the Divine approbation, as the governing principle of conduct, shall almost invariably be followed by the esteem of our fellow-men.* Where the Christian's

* The substance of these observations on the desire of human applause is borrowed from Mr. Wilberforce's admirable treatise on "Practical Christianity." A short anecdote of this great and good man will show how well his public conduct illustrated the truths which his pen so gracefully expressed.

When the Ministry of England were meditating the declaration of the memorable war which followed the outbreak of the first French Revolution, considerable diversity of sentiment prevailed respecting the policy of such a measure. So great was the esteem which the conscientiousness of Mr. Wilberforce had acquired for him amongst the most influential portion of the community, that his opinion was waited for by the Cabinet as what would, in a considerable measure, determine the popularity or unpopularity of the war. When his opposition to it was at last announced, the effect upon the country was, as might have been expected, very great. Mr. Pitt, the Premier, was in particular, so much distressed by it, that his sleep on the night when Mr. Wilberforce's sentiments were made known was completely destroyed. On one other occasion only, the mutiny at the Nore, was the firm mind

sphere is a public one, religion will be found to have led to public honour, fully as effectually as the various tortuous paths of ambition, in which it is so generally pursued. In the more private walks of life, the Christian character cannot expect the same distinguished testimonies to its value, but even in the humblest sphere, religion will be found the source of respect and esteem to all who consistently exemplify its precepts. Even beyond the grave, indeed, the fragrance of the Christian's good name survives, a pleasing contrast to the shame which, if the word of God is to be believed, is the necessary concomitant of sin. "Him that honoureth me," saith the divine record, "I will honour; but he that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed."

Christianity, we would further mention, gives us a fair share of intellectual pleasures, as well as of the innocent relaxations of life. An illustration from the work of a distinguished writer referred to in a preceding note, will sufficiently support this assertion.

"Rich and multiplied are the Christian's springs of innocent relaxation. He relaxes in the temperate use of all the gifts of Providence. Imagination, taste, and genius, and the beauties of creation and art lie open to him. He relaxes in the feast of reason; in

of Mr. Pitt known to have been thus disturbed, during his stormy career as a Statesman. Could a more powerful commentary be given on the scriptural declaration of the value of a good name, than that which is contained in the facts above stated?

the intercourse of society; in the sweets of friendship; in the endearments of love; in the exercise of hope, of confidence, of joy, of gratitude, of universal good-will, and of all the benevolent and generous affections, which, by the gracious ordination of our Creator, while they disinterestedly intend only happiness to others, are most surely productive to ourselves of complacency and peace. Oh! little do they know of the true measure of enjoyment, who can compare these delightful complacencies with the frivolous pleasures of dissipation, or the coarse gratifications of sensuality.”

Fortune, health, honour, and intellectual pleasures however, excellent and substantial blessings though they be, are, after all, considered by Christianity as a secondary class of benefits, in comparison with those moral excellencies which it is her peculiar glory to impart. The gifts we have above enumerated may frequently, in a probationary state, be even wholly withdrawn, and disciplinary purposes effected by the substitution of poverty for riches—sickness for health—sorrow for pleasure—and the censures of a misjudging world for honour and esteem. The choicer blessings of Christianity are subject, however, to no such variations, but continue alike the springs of internal happiness, when the horizon without is cheerless and disconsolate. Let us select for instance, the grand elementary principle of Christian love, and contrast for a moment its grace and beauty,

compared with the ungenial aspect which the selfish passions wear. Inspired by this feeling, the true Christian, for of him alone it can be said, moves like the inhabitant of some higher sphere among the selfish elements which surround him. In whatever circle we trace him, whether distinguished or obscure, one principle we shall find in perpetual operation, the desire, in imitation of his heavenly Father, of producing universal happiness, a desire which by the great law of retribution is surely rewarded by the love of those whose welfare he thus seeks to promote. Not the least excellence of this grace, indeed, is the fact that it furnishes the Christian with a spring of action in the discharge of the relative duties of life, far more universal and complete than any which the selfish policy of the world can supply. In situations of command, it tempers authority with moderation and softens it by kindness: in humbler spheres—it produces obedience, cheerful and active without servility. In the social circle, you will trace its presence banishing the base spirit of detraction and satire, supporting the fainting cause, and mitigating censure against the absent with some kindly plea. In the more important relations of life, it forms the peaceful citizen, the kind parent, and the dutiful child; lights the torch of wedded love, and makes the altar of the domestic affections blaze with a brighter and more cheering glow.

Even to the Christian's relaxations this principle extends; and, while others seek re-

fuge from thought in frivolous dissipation,—to seek out the poor and unhappy; to cheer the sorrowing heart; in a word, the much talked of but little enjoyed “luxury of doing good” is, by the blessed operation of this generous passion, the peculiar prerogative of the Christian. With joys so refined as these, if we for a moment contrast the lawsuit, the duel, the domestic tyranny, the broken tempers, with all the nameless miseries of the private circle, which spring from the operation of the selfish passions, we shall in some faint degree appreciate the opposite blessings of the grace of Christian love.

Had our limits permitted, we might have in a similar manner proceeded to contrast the Christian virtues of humility, meekness, and purity, with their opposite vices of pride, passion, and licentiousness, and shown in detail the necessary connexion of the one class with happiness, and of the other with misery; our space, however, forbids the attempt. For a similar reason, we can in concluding this chapter do no more than enumerate several other excellencies of Christianity, such as the peace of mind and joy of a good conscience which it bestows; the consolations in the hour of trouble which it furnishes; the pleasing retrospect of life which it affords; the friendship of Almighty God which it secures; the exemption from the fears of death and the glory, nay, the triumph, with which it gilds the otherwise dark and sombre hour of dissolution.

CHAPTER IV.

“I was a stricken deer that left the herd
 Long since—With many an arrow deep infix’d
 My panting side was charged when I withdrew
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 There was I found by one who had himself
 Been hurt by the Archers. In his side he bore
 And in his hands and feet the cruel scars.
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew them forth—and healed—and bade me live.”
 COWPER’S TASK.

THERE is a class of individuals, however, and it is to be feared a most extensive one, to whom the observations in the last chapter will suggest emotions by no means of a pleasing or soothing character. To what purpose, for instance, shall we praise, to individuals who have failed in the enterprises of life—the power of Christianity to have averted their misfortunes? to those who groan beneath diseases the fruits of their imprudence or their sins,—its efficacy in preserving health? to the victims of disgrace,—its blessings of a good name? to the mind tortured with remorse—its peace and serenity of conscience? to the aged whose life has been spent in a round of frivolous and irreligious pursuits,—its pleasing retrospect of existence? or, in a word, to what purpose proclaim its power to guide all who obey its laws to happiness,—

to the numbers who must feel that with them the period and the power of active obedience are well nigh gone for ever? It is here, however, that the benignant properties of Christianity are brought into play, and that in its power to mitigate every species of distress, we discover its superiority not only over the obsolete systems of ancient philosophy, with which it is so often on this point unnecessarily contrasted, but over the fascinating modern theories which have met with such an extensive reception in the present day.* To the afflicted and unfortunate of every class, Chris-

* Allusion is here more particularly made to Mr. Combe's well known treatise on the "Constitution of Man," a work which it is to be feared has, notwithstanding the intentions of its author, been productive of much injury to society. The theory of the work in question is, that the misfortunes of life are the punishments inflicted by nature for the violation of certain laws which mankind ought to study and obey; benevolence, it must therefore follow, is little better than a premium for neglecting the rules which constitute human happiness. Such a conclusion is not indeed in terms avowed by the supporters of this theory, but that their doctrines lead in practice to such results will be admitted by all who have watched, either in themselves or others, their tendency to deaden our sympathies with the afflicted, and to substitute showy professions of universal philanthropy for solid practical benevolence. In the work in question however, many valuable truths are mingled with its errors. Christianity, indeed, recognises almost all its fundamental principles; and it is only against its erroneous combinations that she enters her protest. She admits, for instance, in common with it, that the Creator has impressed certain laws on the organic, the physical, and the moral systems. She permits us under the limitations of a sober spirit to

tianity proclaims herself peculiarly the friend ; and the "weary and heavy laden," however complicated their cases may be, are invited to approach One, who is represented with inimitable tenderness, as delighting "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and to comfort all who mourn."

Our limits, it is evident, would not permit us to specify in detail the various misfortunes of life, with the corresponding remedies which Christianity has provided for their relief. We shall, therefore, select only three of the most acute and generally diffused kinds of suffering, in the hope that by exhibiting the balsamic power of Christianity to mitigate these, some unhappy sufferer may be inspired with confidence to throw himself and his sorrows on the compassionate sympathies of the gracious Saviour of our race. No one, however almost inextricably involved in crime and sorrow, who earnestly and sincerely applied to his gentle and merciful Lord for relief, ever had, or ever shall have, reason to say that his

study these laws, as fitted when obeyed, to enlarge our temporal happiness ; but she warns us at the same time, (in direct opposition to the work in question,) of the total inability of our race ever perfectly to keep these laws. She appeals for this fact to the uniform experience of 5,000 years, and assures us that this melancholy retrospect of the past is but too true a representation of the future, and that the majority of mankind must ever remain too weak, too ignorant, and too prejudiced, to yield submission to these laws, even when satisfied that happiness would be the result of obedience.

complaints and griefs were poured forth in vain.

Among the most serious evils of life is poverty. By the Christian system two species of this evil are recognised; the one the result of vice, the other springing from the operation of a variety of causes, simple imprudence perhaps, or the misconduct of the parties with whom the sufferer has been connected. To either of these classes, however, how small the relief which worldly philosophy can bestow. They bring to the first, the chilling information that their misfortunes are the proper consequences of their own misconduct, and to the second, the equally cheerless announcement that their calamities have sprung from omitting to study those natural laws upon which human happiness is framed. Christianity, however, is no such comfortless visitant in the hour of sorrow to those who unfeignedly seek her remedies. Vicious poverty it eradicates from the very core, by drying up the springs of criminal gratification from which it flowed. From the drunkard it takes his intoxicating cup; from the gamester his dice; from the man of pleasure his expensive indulgences; and when it has thoroughly cleansed the former sources of impurity, it pours in its tonics, and restores the once degraded victim of impoverishing habits to his long lost place in the scale of happiness and existence. Virtuous poverty, on the other hand, it relieves, by animating it with courage to relieve itself from its difficulties,

and by drawing to its assistance the means and the sympathies of all the true followers of religion, It ennobles it also, by rendering it the scene of many virtues peculiar to that station ; and, recalling to its recollection, that it was the condition of life which our compassionate Lord assumed, alleviates its sorrows by the assurance that its inequalities will speedily be rectified in a better state of existence. Consolations these, not nominal, but real, and which have gladdened and buoyed up the hearts of millions, to whom the meaning of the term “ natural laws ” must ever have remained unknown. To this numerous class of the unfortunate struggling with poverty or embarrassed circumstances, our gracious Saviour in his Gospel thus proffers relief. Shall his accents of kindness meet with no reply ?

The consolatory properties of Christianity are also peculiarly applicable to those who are suffering from any species of bodily pain or affliction. In this class of misfortunes, no less than in the preceding, we see the powerlessness of modern systems of philosophy to produce an appropriate remedy. They may speculate on the origin and causes of the suffering ; point out the particular organic law which has been violated, and theorize on the benevolent intention of pain. Although such theories, however, may amuse us in the hour of health, miserable comforters do they prove to us when racked with acute suffering, or pining under protracted disease. The ano-

dynes and remedies of Christianity are of a more inviting character. Its compassionate and Divine Founder is no longer, indeed, present in the midst of us to heal the sick, to calm the feverish pulse or assuage the groan of anguish, but the influence of his doctrines, and the consolations of his promises still remain in all their unimpaired richness and efficacy. In the great variety of diseases, Christianity becomes the handmaid of the physician, from its having the same natural tendency to repair health when lost, that it had to preserve it before it became impaired. Great and valuable, however, as is this property of Christianity, we are more struck with its alchemic power to convert affliction into a positive blessing. For the last 1800 years, what have its doctrines in this respect not done, and what are they at this moment not actually doing? They are rendering sickness that would have been otherwise overwhelming, comparatively easy to be borne; they are supporting the fainting spirits; raising the mind superior almost to the influence of pain, and in the midst of gloom and darkness and sorrow purifying and preparing it for an eternity of inconceivably glorious effulgence and happiness. To this weary and heavy laden class, then, the Great Physician exhibits his healing remedies. Surely such love will not be permitted to proffer its gracious invitations in vain!

There is a third class of the victims of misfortune, a class from the peculiar severity of

their sufferings, more to be pitied than any other; those whose consciences are stricken with remorse for the perpetration of crimes, and appalled by the justly merited apprehensions not only of Divine but human punishments.

“Guilt still appals, and conscience, ne’er asleep,
Wounds with incessant strokes not loud but deep;
While the vexed mind her own tormentor plies
A scorpion scourge, unmarked by human eyes.
Ah me! no tortures which the poets feign
Can match the fierce, the unutterable pain
He feels, who day and night devoid of rest
Carries his own accuser in his breast.”*

This picture of the poet is no exaggerated one, nor is remorse a case so rare as we might expect to find it in this age of refinement, nor one peculiar to those classes of society unsoftened by education. There is but too much reason to fear, that if we could pierce through the mental veil, we should behold its sufferers in the gorgeous circles of opulence and rank, in the brilliant assembly of pleasure, and even in those quieter domestic circles, the most unlikely, we might suppose, to have been haunted by this terrific visitor. “Some transgression,” to use the words of an acute theological writer, “has been committed perhaps in early youth, which has been a thousand times forgotten and a thousand times brought back by memory to view, and every time it comes the

* Gifford’s “Juvenal.”

heart sinks and the spirit writhes beneath the rankling of the wound. It may be covered up, it may be forgotten; like a man with a wounded side, care may be taken to keep the tender part from the slightest touch which may disturb its quiet; but the wound is still there, and it cannot be healed till the sting which was left in it be taken away.”* To sufferers of this class modern philosophy can afford no aid. In other cases it may pretend to supply some consolations, but here it quits the field, and leaves the victim who has fallen over the moral precipice, mangled and bleeding without attempting to administer relief. The favourite theory of modern political science is, that criminal laws to be efficacious must be unbendingly executed, and in such a system no provision can of course exist for remission of punishment to an offender however penitent.

Even to this unhappy class of men, however, does Christianity arise with healing on its wings, promising to the worst and vilest of offenders, on a heartfelt repentance and radical change of character flowing from religious motives, a full and complete extrication from the eternal, and in a great measure from the temporal, consequences of their guilt. It assures us that in this state of probation the Almighty has wise reasons for this apparently unequal distribution of his providence in remitting to some individuals the punish-

* Abbot's "Corner Stone."

ments inflicted upon others, especially as the future lives of individuals thus pardoned have frequently been distinguished above all others for their excellence and exemplary character. In proof of God's willingness thus to pardon, it points to cases where, on a sincere scriptural repentance, crimes which we esteem the greatest have been forgiven, and the offenders, as a token of the acceptance of their heartfelt contrition and amendment, have had temporal mercies of the richest character bestowed upon them. These cases it is also to be observed are adduced as examples adapted for every age, and not as specimens of the Almighty's dispensations in a rude and uncivilized period of society. The community need entertain no apprehension of danger resulting from the leniency thus shown to penitent offenders; their numbers must always, it is to be feared, be but few, and even by those thus pardoned there will be felt before their peace of mind can be regained, an amount of mental anguish and misery more than sufficient to deter others from venturing into the paths of sin. In all the cases of misfortune, indeed, which Christianity relieves, this point must carefully be kept in view, that notwithstanding the remission of the offence, enough of the bitterness of its fruits will for a time be left to make the sufferer, however penitent, feel, that it has been "a bitter and an evil thing to sin against the Lord." To the truly "weary and heavy laden" class of sufferers we have been just describing, the Saviour of

the world appeals. Although "without money and without price," let them approach unto him, and they will find that God's ways are not like men's ways, and that although their "sins have been like scarlet, they shall be whiter than snow," and that if they "be willing and obedient," they shall yet, notwithstanding all that is past, "eat the good of the land." Isaiah i. 18, 19.

By the examples we have thus given of the power of Christianity to soothe the three great evils of life, poverty, pain, and remorse, it has been our endeavour to inspire some timorous sufferers with confidence to throw themselves in humble unreserved faith on the promises of their Saviour. However complicated and apparently hopeless their cases, let them be assured that if they pray earnestly for assistance, adding their own strenuous efforts to their prayers, they will be led on from "strength to strength," until difficulty after difficulty being surmounted, they are completely disenthralled from their wretched bondage.

In endeavouring thus to win the mind over to a candid reception of the doctrines of Christianity, by exhibiting its powers to preserve temporal happiness, and to regain it when lost, it would be dangerous to the sincere inquirer after truth, were we to disguise from him the fact that it is impossible to gain these advantages, without many a severe struggle, and that in the outset of the Christian race, they are not even to be ex-

pected. The religion which springs from temporal motives will, it is to be feared, be found sickly and short-lived. We would rather exhibit Christianity, therefore, in its plain and unflattered aspect as a system of tremendous difficulty and danger, requiring active watchfulness and severe self-denial. "Unless a man," says our blessed Lord, "give up all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" nor is this an isolated passage, but we are everywhere reminded that it is needless to attempt Christianity, unless we are prepared to endure much tribulation, and at the call of duty to part with life, fortune, reputation, and to suffer cheerfully the loss of every earthly blessing. While we might well shrink, however, from attempting this in our own strength, we are assured that we shall be furnished with Divine assistance in the most ample measure, and are indeed everywhere informed that it is on this we are alone to rely. Let not the serious inquirer then be discouraged, but while he surveys the really alarming difficulties of the route, let him remember the numbers of persons weaker than himself who have overcome them; let him consider also the cordials which will invigorate him; and above all, let him fix his eyes on the stupendous reward of everlasting happiness which will surely attend his persevering efforts.

With enlarging on this topic we might well conclude this extended chapter, but in what words should we convey what even

the language of Scripture labours in describing. "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." Let us meditate well on a phrase, rendered almost powerless through constant use, "everlasting life." To understand its duration in some degree aright, let us crowd together the combinations of numbers, and employ the scale of science which reckons by myriads and by millions. Let us observe the pleasures which the Almighty has scattered over this sinful world, and reflect how vast the enjoyment which his omnipotence can bestow upon those who love him in a sinless state of existence. When we have well weighed these momentous subjects, let us seriously ask, whether a few difficulties should deter us in the prosecution of such enjoyment, and falling down at the feet of the Saviour of the world, let us entreat and implore in earnest prayer, that the natural darkness and obscurity of our minds may be removed, and that we may be enabled to lay hold of the prize of "everlasting life."

CHAPTER V.

“By what unseen and unsuspected arts
The serpent Error twines round human hearts.”
PROGRESS OF ERROR.

WE will suppose, then, that some individual, influenced by the considerations which have been adduced in the preceding chapters, has felt the burden of sceptical or irreligious habits, and begun seriously to meditate on the subject of Christianity. Hopeful and promising as such a disposition must be regarded, it will be of some importance to point out a few of the difficulties which at this stage surround the portals of religious inquiry, and to examine the mode in which their prejudicial effects may be best counteracted. Among these difficulties we would first class an unfortunate habit which many, and particularly talented individuals have formed, of attaching themselves to some favourite theory, admitting or rejecting whatever truths are submitted to their notice, in proportion as they agree or disagree with this uncertain standard of their own erection. The present age above all others seems to have been destined to witness the formation of such theories, upon almost every branch of literary and scientific, or moral and religious inquiry. Decked

in fascination of language, sanctioned in many cases by the passport of names of eminence, the young are peculiarly in danger of being led away by their attractions, untaught as they are by experience, that on the current of literature, such theories rise, foam, sparkle, and disappear like bubbles on the running stream. In many cases systems of this kind, as might be expected, from the crude manner in which they are formed, are at variance with the doctrines of Scripture. The evil in such cases is this, that the admirer of the theories in question, instead of meekly reverencing the authority of revelation on the ground of its attestation by miracles, or waiting at least till his opinions had been tested by experience, at once rejects the whole of Scripture as false, or unsparingly cuts away that portion of it which seems at variance with his favourite system. To the hearts of men in this state, Christianity can obtain no admission till they have parted with their preconceptions, and adopted a more philosophical spirit of inquiry. If human systems and the Divine record appear to clash in their conclusions, the observation of the past warrants us in asserting that the former must eventually give way. The latter, at all events, cannot recede from that commanding position which it has so long occupied. It has outlived the wreck of ten thousand theories, each countenanced in its day by much that was noble, and learned, and great. It will flourish too in undecaying vigour, when even the

name of many a modern system, that now rears itself in proud opposition to its authority has passed into silent oblivion.

A second and a powerful obstacle to the admission of the truths of Scripture is, an addiction on the part of the inquirer to the sinful indulgences which that volume so uncompromisingly condemns. Infidelity, it has often been said, and the assertion cannot be too frequently repeated, is a disease not so much of the head as of the heart. To a sceptical mind, however, the meaning of this phrase may seem ambiguous. It does not, indeed, at first sight appear, how the absence of moral character should impart to the examination of the evidences of Christianity a greater difficulty than it would to the investigation of any other point of historical inquiry, a species of knowledge in which great attainments have been made by men of notoriously immoral lives. From whatever cause, however, it may arise, the fact is proved by daily experience, that in proportion as the vices of our nature are subdued, scales drop from the mental vision, and the truths of revelation become more and more transparent. All this, however, is in reality nothing more than the result of a principle, which may be seen at work in the ordinary affairs of life as well as in religion, of a disposition, namely, in the human mind, readily to believe what is agreeable to its inclinations and bitterly to resist whatever opposes itself to them. From repeated observation, indeed,

we learn the fact that our judgment, although capable when unbiassed of leading us to correct conclusions, is yet a treacherous faculty, and, like some unscrupulous judge, easily bribed to sell its decisions to whichever of our passions, or prepossessions, is disposed to pay the highest price. After this explanation, therefore, it may be readily imagined, what prejudices whilst studying Scripture must be excited in a mind which at every page of the volume finds some favourite indulgence condemned, and how easily in time such prejudices assume the form of direct hostility. To men in this state, indeed, it is needless to address reasoning—its force will fall unheeded on the ear. They must be urged, as a preliminary step, to part with their vices. One sinful gratification abandoned, one act of duty performed for conscience' sake, will be found, they may be assured, a more effectual means of conviction, than the combined arguments of all the champions of Christianity.

Another difficulty which tends powerfully to impede the reception of the doctrines of Scripture is, the confused and irregular mode in which scepticism conducts its investigations. The most reasonable process would appear to be, to confine the attention to a few plain and simple truths, and from these to pass on to what is more difficult and abstruse. In sceptical minds, however, the whole of this process is reversed. The most mysterious parts of the system are approached first, and being viewed apart from their relative truths, it is

not surprising that they should appear perplexing and obscure. It is scarcely possible to exaggerate the evils which flow from this habit of fastening on the difficulties of a subject, to the neglect of those parts of it which are simple and clear. It establishes the fatal practice of rushing precipitately to general conclusions, without due examination of the premises on which they are founded, gives objections, trifling in themselves, the weight of solid argument, and instead of permitting the mind soberly to examine the point under inquiry, colours the subject with a thousand prismatic hues which dazzle and perplex the mental vision.

A fourth, and perhaps an equally serious obstacle to the recognition of Divine truth arises from the circumstance, that many individuals, having been long disused to reflection upon spiritual subjects, and having been continually coming in contact with objects of a palpable nature,—things, for instance, which they can see, or touch, or hear,—gradually allow their judgment to be so unduly influenced by their senses, as to believe nothing which is not of a material and tangible kind. The necessary tendency of this habit is gradually to unfit the mind for the examination of objects of a spiritual character, by giving to them an air of unreality and a visionary and impalpable hue. It is astonishing, indeed, to observe how incapacitated for the study of the Scriptures men in this state of mind insensibly become. The miracles, the types

of that volume, its declarations respecting the unseen world and its inhabitants, appear to them little else than romance. In vain do you endeavour by argument to convince them; you may silence their objections, indeed, but you will hopelessly endeavour entirely to remove them, until their understanding has been disenthralled from this bondage to the senses. Let such persons be persuaded to habituate themselves to meditation on spiritual objects, they will then be surprised to find how many of the difficulties which they experienced were entirely of their own making, and how much of what seemed to their apprehension strange and improbable, appeared so simply from its novelty, and from their having omitted to familiarize themselves with reflection on such subjects.

In order that we may the better perceive how these combined preconceptions operate, let us draw from reality the picture of some young student in the present day, with his principles sapped by scepticism, sitting down to examine, in a cursory manner, the truths of revelation. He commences, we shall suppose, with the Old Testament. He has imbibed a smattering of geology, and is in the outset perplexed by his inability to reconcile his favourite theory on that subject with the Mosaic account of the creation. He has glanced through some philosophical treatises on the origin of society, and is reluctant to abandon the brilliant speculations which have been hazarded on that point, for the simple

unpretending account which Scripture contains of the origin of the human race. If he be a physiologist, he startles at the reasons assigned by Scripture for the introduction of death into the system of nature; if a linguist, he is equally shocked by the account of the origin of the diversity of languages at the Tower of Babel. He reads of the severe punishments inflicted upon sin and is unable to reconcile them with modern systems for the mitigation of the criminal code. He is a believer too, perhaps, in the favourite theory of the progressive advancement of the world to a state of complete happiness by the diffusion of education and the liberal arts, and is disagreeably disturbed by finding a great deal in the sacred volume to contradict this supposition. He discovers too much in it which is totally dark and obscure to his apprehension, and still more of what is bitter and unpalatable to his taste. At each step indeed, his prejudices sustain a shock, and in each page his pride receives a wound. Above all, however, he is uneasy to find many of what he is in the habit of terming mere peccadilloes treated as grave offences, and denounced as the subject of severe retribution. His passions, therefore, begin now to sound the alarm. "He will never believe," he exclaims, "that God will be so hard as to condemn mankind for giving way to a few venial frailties, which after all, indeed, do very little harm to anybody. Gloomy bigots may think so, but he never will; God is love, and is

much too merciful to punish his poor creatures, for indulging the inclinations which he has implanted in their nature." When, by such miserable sophistries as these, he has quieted his rising fears, he lays down the volume and his imagination begins to work, blending in one confused mass objections of every form and hue. He reflects on the numbers of false religions that have appeared in the world, and a secret hope pervades his mind, that Christianity may, after all, be found equally untrue. It is impossible, he thinks, that God would have created so many human beings merely to perish. He recollects the number of individuals who are living in the world without religion, and consoles himself by the reflection, that, if he is wrong, he has many to share his errors, and his danger. His thoughts taking another discursive range, he is staggered by the doctrine of the Trinity, by the size of Noah's ark, (for there is no attempt at coherence in his thoughts,) or by Joshua's miracle of making the sun stand still. When he has sufficiently perplexed himself by these irregular sallies of his imagination, his mind turns to that great stumbling-block, the inconsistency of the professors of religion; and recollecting numbers who frequent church, and go through all its forms without being more exemplary (if so much so) than himself in the discharge of the relative duties of life, he feels quite certain that he is just as safe as they are, without so many pretensions. When these and similar

trains of thought, if, indeed, the discursions of a roaming fancy deserve to be dignified with that title, have sufficiently harassed his mind, he rises at this stage of the inquiry more bewildered and perplexed than when he commenced it.

He resides, we may suppose, for the sake of illustration, in one of our large cities, and after winding up his meditations, walks out into some of its crowded thoroughfares, filled with all the stir and bustle of a swarming population. What Scripture so well terms the "lust of the eye," and "the pride of life," now begin to take their magic effect upon his imagination. How different is every thing beside him from the subjects he has just been studying! It is the nineteenth century! All around him is real and tangible, whereas, everything of which he was reading was visionary and impalpable, and happened, if it happened at all, thousands of years ago, in a rude and semi-barbarous age. Wherever he looks, he beholds masses of his fellow-creatures going on in as perfect indifference to the precepts of the volume he has just been perusing, as if it had never been in existence. His ear is stunned by the roar of commerce; his eye dazzled by the display of luxury and opulence; and his fancy bewildered by the voluptuous blandishments of pleasure, which everywhere court its notice. Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, therefore, the subject of Christianity recedes from his thoughts, leaving his mind more darkened, more confused, and

more perplexed, than when he first began the investigation. If we suppose, farther, the above processes of thought to have been several times repeated with the same results, we may form some idea of the Egyptian darkness, which finally settles down on the sceptical mind; a darkness which, if accompanied as it generally is by indulgence in sinful pleasures, requires more than human power to dissipate. Although the above picture will not apply to every case of Infidelity, yet numbers, it is to be feared, have no better grounds for their unbelief, than the difficulties they have experienced while examining the Scriptures, in the confused and irregular manner we have just described. Can we wonder, then, at the erroneous assertion so frequently heard in the mouths of such persons, that religion is a subject which the more it is studied, the more obscure and uncertain it will appear?

Let us suppose now, however, a more pleasing case, that of a man who, heartily wearied of the thralldom of Infidelity, and of the bondage of vice, which is its usual concomitant, turns to Scripture with a real and hearty desire to know the truth, and to practise his duty. From such a man, then, Christianity demands, in the first place, seriousness and humility,—seriousness, to dispel the effects which levity invariably produces; and humility, combined with a teachable spirit, as a pre-requisite, without which there exists a moral incapacity for the reception of the truths of Christianity.

Its next step is, (with a precision so rigid, that philosophy must admire, and so simple that the unlettered peasant must understand it,) to define the limits within which the investigation must be conducted. It traces a circle around those propositions with which our faculties are competent to grapple. Beyond this circle it warns us, however, lie the regions of mist and darkness, mazes and labyrinths, trackless and impervious to the human understanding. It warns us, that to commence grappling with questions beyond this line of demarcation, is utter ruin; but at the same time it invites us, so long as we confine ourselves within it, to bring every species of test, and to crowd together the accumulated stores of human learning, to assist in the scrutiny of that portion of the subject to which it has limited our inquiries. This distinction in the powers of the human mind, which Christianity in laying down the above rules has presupposed to exist, is one consonant to all true philosophy, and the value of which will be felt by the serious inquirer, in every step of his future progress. A short extract from an author* who has written much true as well as much false philosophy, will put the proposition in a clearer light:—

“In natural science, three subjects of inquiry may be distinguished. 1st. What exists? 2d. What is the purpose or design of what exists? and 3d. Why was what exists de-

* See Combe, on “The Constitution of Man.”

signed for such uses as it evidently subserves?

“It is matter of fact, for instance, that arctic regions and torrid zones exist; that a certain kind of moss is most abundant in Lapland in winter, and that the reindeer feeds on it and enjoys health and vigour, in situations where most other animals would die; that camels exist in Africa; that they have broad hoofs, and stomachs fitted to retain water for a length of time, and that they flourish amidst arid tracts of sand, where the reindeer would not live for a day. All this falls under the inquiry, What exists?

“In contemplating these facts the understanding is naturally led to infer that one object of the Lapland moss is to feed the reindeer, and that one purpose of the deer is to assist man; and that broad feet have been given to the camel to allow it to walk on sand, and a retentive stomach to fit it for arid places in which water is found only at wide intervals. These are inquiries into the uses or purpose of what exists, and they constitute a legitimate exercise of the human intellect.

“But, thirdly, we may ask, Why were the physical elements of nature created such as they are? Why were summer, autumn, spring, and winter, introduced? Why were animals formed of organised matter? Why were torrid zones and trackless wastes of snow called into existence? These are inquiries why what exists was made such as it is, or into the will of the Deity in creation?

“Now man’s perceptive qualities are adequate to the first inquiry, and his reflective faculties to the second; but it may well be doubted whether he has powers suited to the third.”

In almost a similar manner does Christianity address itself to the candid investigator of its pages. It brings forward its varied evidence of type, miracle, and prophecy. The existence of certain works containing a record of these evidences, the authenticity and the genuineness of such works, the credibility of the writers, the character of the motives by which they were actuated, are all subjects of inquiry to which our perceptive and reflecting faculties are perfectly competent. So long as we confine ourselves to these points we tread upon safe ground, and, with candour and sincerity, cannot fail to arrive at sound conclusions. When we have proceeded thus far, however, it warns us that for a wise and benevolent reason, truths are scattered throughout the Scripture, like the phenomena we have just alluded to in the volume of nature, beyond the reach of our present limited faculties, which in a future state, however, will be rendered clear and transparent. A principle called Faith, it informs us, is the medium through which alone doctrines so much beyond the grasp of our reason can be apprehended. Few parts of the Christian system have met with stronger opposition than this. By many nominal adherents of religion it is secretly viewed, if not openly

represented, as a harsh arrangement on the part of Omnipotence, thus to strew revelation with difficulties, and after having endowed its creatures with reason, to forbid them the use of it. By another class, again, it has been assailed with ridicule, as a crafty device of superstition, for shackling the mental powers of its votaries, in order to prevent them from detecting the imposture by which they are deluded. It is hard to see one of the kindest arrangements of Providence for the instruction of our race thus perverted and misunderstood. The quotation given above from a writer, not generally considered as overbiassed in favour of superstition, may indeed be sufficient to show, that, by the same process of reasoning, Providence might be charged with cruelty, in having given us in the volume of nature a numerous class of subjects, to the right apprehension of which, our faculties not only never have been, but never can be competent. This mode, however, of receiving instruction by faith, or as the term in its present sense may be defined, by the belief of some proposition imperfectly grasped by our understanding, on the authority of a party on whose credibility we rely,—this mode of receiving instruction, we repeat, is nothing more than the extension to religion of a principle whose application we readily admit in the ordinary affairs of life. In the education of a child, for instance, we convey to its mind many points which it can perfectly understand. It is impossible, however, even

were it desirable, so to simplify our instructions, as to avoid communicating to it much information, for the truth of which, until its faculties have expanded, it must rest either entirely, or in a great measure, upon the authority of its teacher. We can tell it, for instance, that the sun is larger than the earth; but it would be no less ridiculous than impracticable to explain to it the elaborate process of calculation, by which we arrive at our conclusions. We can inform it, when it first begins to lisp the alphabet, that what it is thus learning will be of great importance to it in after-life; but how impossible it would be, by any powers of words, to make it fully understand this truth, until it shall have arrived at riper years!

The slightest reflection, indeed, must satisfy us, that, if a child is not to believe anything but what it perfectly understands, it must soon believe nothing at all. Let the experience of our own day, too, be permitted to speak upon this subject. In it more than in any other, perhaps, have new modes of facilitating the instruction of youth been devised, yet even in the simplest of these we shall find, that much must be communicated on the authority of the teacher, for the perfect apprehension of which the scholar must be indebted to maturer years. By the adoption of any other course, indeed, the pliable habits of mind peculiar to childhood, and so favourable to the acquisition of knowledge, would be irretrievably lost. Now in a man-

ner exactly analogous to what we have been describing does the word of God address itself to our understanding. It assures us that we are here in a state of pupilage, receiving instruction for eternity; and that the education, which is thus imparted to us, bears upon our future existence, in the same manner that the instructions of youth influenced our manhood. In the information which it communicates, there are many points to the investigation of which our reason is competent, and in the study of such it invites us thankfully to make use of that faculty. It apprises us, however, that there are matters connected with the invisible world, and God's mode of dealing with us there, which, although necessary now to be taught, would in vain, until our faculties have been enlarged in a future state, be attempted to be fully explained to us. Before this class of truths it calls us to humble our reason, and to receive them by faith, in the same confiding spirit, that a child exhibits to the instructions of some beloved parent. It is only, however, a comparatively small portion of its doctrines that it requires to be received in such a manner, and aware how much this humbling of our reason might be abused by superstition and imposture, it produces, what the latter have always failed to do, satisfactory credentials to establish its right to claim such an important concession from our mental powers. These credentials are miracles. It assumes, what every unprejudiced mind will readily admit, that if a

person can be proved beyond all doubt, and in support of some great moral truths, to have suspended the laws of nature, (to have risen from the dead, for instance,) we are warranted, on the strength of such a fact, to believe the declarations of the party, that he was a messenger sent from God, and to give to his instruction on points above our reason the most ready and implicit belief. Here, however, we repeat, lies the grand point of distinction between the faith demanded by Scripture and that exacted by systems of superstition and imposture. The former produces credentials, the latter, however, either exhibit none, or, if they occasionally attempt to do so, they call upon us, as the first step in the examination, to lay aside our reason, and to receive them by faith alone, without inquiry, and without a doubt. Christianity, on the other hand, orders as a duty her credentials to be examined by reason, and then, and not till then, does she order that faculty to surrender up to faith its office of Guide. False systems of religion also, it must be remembered, compel reason to be thrown away altogether, whereas Christianity only requests it to be suspended for a time, and that too upon comparatively a small number of points. She assures us, further, that, in a future state, we shall perceive this to have been a kind arrangement of our Heavenly Father, dictated by him in compassion to the weakness of his children, and flowing from no desire to keep back any portion of truth that would in

reality have conduced to their happiness. Let not the sincere inquirer, then, entertain apprehensions of having his mental faculties intralled, by thus humbling his spirit, and distrusting his own powers. The yoke through which the amazing intellects of Newton and Locke condescended to pass, it will be no dishonour for him to bear. With sincerity, with humility, and with faith, above all with a desire to know and to do the will of God, he will find each difficulty vanish in succession, and truths, once dim and obscure, become clear and transparent to his apprehension.

Is this, then, the humble philosophical course pursued by modern scepticism? Has it, when examining Scripture, confined with just precision its attention to the two classes of inquiry to which the human faculties alone are competent, and approached the third with diffidence and humility? Alas! most different has been the route which it has followed. We shall find the vast proportion of Infidelity to have sprung from little else than the gradual and almost imperceptible advances of sinful pleasures, darkening the understanding and blinding the judgment. We shall discover the few votaries of scepticism who have occasionally thought upon the truth of Christianity to have, in their pretended examination of the subject, wantonly abandoned the circle which true philosophy prescribed, and to have blindly rushed into the labyrinths of error, employing as their guide not

the sober torch of reason, but the deceitful light of a wayward and erring imagination. Ah! what must be the feelings of these unhappy men, when, in another state of existence, these subjects shall flash upon them in all their undisguised reality; when what seemed dreams shall prove to have been sober truths; and when too late they shall make the appalling discovery, that they squandered away in frivolous inquiries the period of their eternal probation, and ruined beyond recovery their dearest, because their everlasting interests!

CHAPTER VI.

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” — *Paul before Agrippa.*

IT is by no means our intention to enter into any thing like a regular examination of the evidences of Christianity. That field has been too often gleaned to permit the possibility either of fresh materials being gathered, or of the stores already accumulated being displayed to greater advantage. As we have in our last chapter, however, accompanied the sceptic in his devious wanderings from that circle to which true wisdom would have limited his inquiries, let us now retrace our steps, and regaining those salutary limits from which we have strayed, examine for a little some of those objects which within them meet our view. The regions which we have left are, as has been truly observed, “dark and slippery to the human foot;” here at last, however, “we shall tread with freedom, on sure ground, and in the light of day.” Among the various objects within this circle which address themselves to the grasp of our intellectual powers, few seem more deserving of notice than the evidences which support that keystone of the Christian system, the re-

surrection of Jesus Christ. In our next chapter we shall have occasion to submit to our reader some truths which call upon him for the exercise of humble and implicit faith: a brief statement, therefore, of one of the leading credentials which authorize us to demand such an important concession from his reason, appears here peculiarly appropriate. The present argument, also, seems particularly adapted to counteract the loose and irregular mode in which the sceptical mind is accustomed to approach religious subjects, from its chaining the attention down to a proposition, which has all the certainty without the abstruseness of a mathematical demonstration. The writer of these pages, indeed, feels the more warranted in making this assertion, as the argument in question was that which first awoke him from a state of mind similar to what he has described in the preceding chapter. He trusts, too, that he may be permitted to hope that what he shall advance will be read with more interest and received with greater candour, as proceeding from one, who, after having in vain sought for some mode of evading the force of this miracle, was compelled at last to bow to the evidence on which it is based. He has in treating the subject endeavoured in some degree to follow the inductive mode of inquiry, having recourse to direct argument as sparingly as possible, and doing little more, indeed, than submitting the facts of the question in regular order, in such a manner, however, that each

proposition, if admitted, must call for belief in its successor.

The point, then, submitted for our inquiry is, whether or not there is evidence to prove that a person, after having been three days dead, rose to life and appeared to a number of competent witnesses. The sequence, of course, to be drawn from such a miracle is, that the party who so suspended the laws of nature, if he claimed to be a messenger sent from God, is entitled, upon the strength of such an act of Divine power, to have his claims admitted, and to demand the concession of our reason to faith, on points beyond the grasp of the former faculty. A volume called the New Testament is the book in which the account of the miracle now under examination is recorded, and in strict philosophical accuracy we are bound, in the first place, to show that the work in question is a genuine and authentic production. That point, indeed, may be found explained at such length in the most elementary treatise on the Christian evidences, that here, perhaps, it might with perfect propriety have been taken for granted. As the subject will be new, however, to many of our readers, a little information upon it, couched in a popular form, may not prove altogether unacceptable. It will scarcely be expected, of course, that we should descend to minute details, or do more than advert to one or two of the strongest features in the argument.

The slightest examination, then, of the

New Testament, is sufficient, we may observe, to satisfy us that it is not the production of modern times, but of a very early age. We can prove at once, for instance, that it did not first make its appearance in the last century, by producing numerous copies of it bearing the date of the years 1600 and 1500. In this manner we trace the volume back to the period of the invention of printing. At that point this species of proof necessarily terminates, but it immediately assumes a new form, equally satisfactory, though scarcely so familiar to our apprehension. Manuscripts are now the medium of evidence, and we discover that there are modes by which the age of these documents can be ascertained, almost as exactly as that of a printed work. On going, then, to the principal libraries of Europe, to those of Oxford, or Cambridge, or Paris, to the Escorial or the Vatican, we shall find in each of them copies of the New Testament, transcribed in various languages, long before the invention of printing, and in point of number so extensive that a series of them up to the fourth century can be established. To understand this more clearly, our reader has only, when visiting the British Museum, to inspect the "Codex Alexandrinus," and to study the tests by which it is proved to have been the production of the century last named. Owing to the frail materials, however, of which manuscripts were composed, none of an earlier date than that just alluded to are known to have been pre-

served. At this point, therefore, the evidence again assumes a slightly altered form, without suffering, however, any diminution of its strength or importance. Let the reader consult Paley's "Evidences." He will find clearly arranged in it a list of authors belonging to the third century, who quote the principal books of the New Testament, as being well known in their day. He will discover another list of writers in the second century, bearing a similar testimony to their authenticity, until step by step the publication of the work is traced back to a period of some twenty or thirty years after the events which it narrates had occurred. He will find, indeed, the four Gospels to have been from the most early times extensively circulated, to have been quoted by contemporary writers personally acquainted with their authors, and to have had, soon after their publication, commentaries written upon them, and harmonies made of their contents. He will discover, in short, that there never was a period when this volume lay unnoticed, but that from the moment of its appearance before the world, it attracted marked observation, rousing into action the noblest feelings of our nature, but stimulating at the same time into opposition the strongest prejudices of the human mind.

In this manner, then, it may be proved, that the New Testament was published in the first century, and within a few years after the events which it narrates had occurred

The argument requires, it is true, an appeal to books, but considering how easily accessible in the present day such a source of information is, that negligence must be indeed criminal, which grudges the expenditure of but a little time and attention on a question of so important a character. The next part of our subject, however, (the proof, namely, that the facts mentioned in this volume are truly stated,) may be comprehended without the necessity of any reference of the above nature. The New Testament, it is evident, is a work which most strongly opposes the corrupt propensities of our race. Its authority, too, depends in a great measure upon a train of circumstantial facts of a miraculous character, which it states as having occurred only a few years before the date of its publication. The truth or falsehood of its statements might, therefore, have been ascertained, by almost every class of persons whom it addressed in the first century. The unpalatable nature of its doctrines ensured for it also so hostile a reception, that its declarations if erroneous must necessarily have drawn forth from its opponents an immediate and a crushing confutation. An illustration borrowed from our own times may place this assertion, perhaps, in a stronger light. This is the first of July, 1843. Were to-morrow morning, then, a book to be published in London, stating, that in the year 1820, and in the month of January, a person was tried at the Old Bailey before the late Lord Ellenborough; that he

was condemned to death and hanged; that he was buried in St. Sepulchre's Church-yard; that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen applied to the Secretary of State for a detachment of foot-guards to watch the grave; that their request was complied with, but that in spite of their precautions the person had risen from the dead and appeared to several witnesses: were the volume farther to call upon the inhabitants of Great Britain to believe in this miracle, and to propose on the strength of it an entirely new religion, with duties annexed to it, of a severe and self-denying character; were it to denounce Christianity as an imposture, and to attack the English and Presbyterian Churches, as founded on delusion; to oppose with equal boldness the Dissenting and Roman Catholic bodies, and to throw itself into direct collision with the Chartists, the Socialists, and the various political parties of the present day; that, in a word, it contradicted the passions and interests of all classes of the community, and stated as its authority for so doing nothing more than the miracle in question; were such a work, we repeat, to be published tomorrow, how many converts to its repulsive doctrines would it make? Not one, we may venture with the utmost confidence to assert. Allow, however, that we are wrong in this supposition; assume for a moment (what would be little else than a miracle) that a few people could be found to believe it,—nay,

even admit, for the sake of argument, that the imposture began to spread, and that it threatened to become general; could not one hundred thousand witnesses step forward, to prove that the work was a tissue of falsehoods,—that they had been in London in the year 1820,—that they had had the most ample opportunities of knowing what took place then, and that not one fact mentioned in the volume had ever occurred at all?

Let us apply, then, this illustration to the period in which the four Gospels were, for the first time, ushered into the world. There were many features in the society of that age, which corresponded exactly with the parallel we have just drawn. On the one side, in opposition, stood the Jewish Ceremonial Dispensation, interwoven with the early associations and national prepossessions of a large portion of the community. On the other, were arranged the Roman and Grecian systems of mythology, deeply rooted in the minds of immense multitudes. All around too were the still darker phalanxes of Pagan superstition, the attachment of whose votaries may be fairly estimated by what we now witness of it in other lands. More formidable still, were ranged in scornful hostility the philosophic schools, an acute and learned body, through whose ranks any scheme of imposture might hopelessly endeavour to penetrate. There was one day, then, when these various systems stood arrayed in all the

strength and power which the growth of centuries could impart. There was another day, when for the first time the Gospel made its appearance, fearlessly combating them all, —opposing the strongest prejudices of their adherents,—stirring up wherever it came the bitterest hostility,—calling on men to part with their dearest interests, and adducing as its authority for such a demand, not some doctrine which rested in the imagination, but a chain of facts, susceptible if false of a prompt and easy contradiction, from the time and the scene of their occurrence having been laid within the memory, and within the neighbourhood of almost all whom they addressed. Such a volume, we repeat, one day appeared, fearlessly entered the arena with the opposing phalanxes we have named, and single-handed overthrew them all. Every plan for checking its progress, which a bigoted but powerful and talented Government could devise, was carried into effect; not one endeavour, however, was made to impugn the veracity of its statements, although that must have been the best mode of crushing the imposture, had any such existed. That so obvious and so effectual a mode of stopping the delusion was left untried, when witnesses by ten thousands could have been procured, can be ascribed, then, only to one cause—to the fact, that the opponents of the Gospel were aware that however unpalatable its doctrines, the statements at least on which

these doctrines rested were too well substantiated by evidence to admit of confutation.*

When to these arguments, however, we add the effect that must be produced on every candid mind, by a perusal of the book itself, the evidences of its truth becomes still more unequivocal. An air of sincerity breathes throughout it. Honesty, indeed, is stamped on every page. The writers' mode of relating circumstances is singularly artless, modest, and unaffected. What they state is confirmed by many contemporary historians. The absence of all attempt at collusion is evinced by the natural vein in which their narrative is couched, and even by those minor discrepan-

* Were the chain of historical evidence which we have produced in favour of the New Testament to be entirely wanting, and were not one writer of antiquity to allude to it, the authenticity of that volume, it will be perceived, could still be proved by the argument given above. A work like the Koran, which gratifies the passions,—a legend of the Romish Church, which flatters a powerful religious body,—the reveries of Johanna Southcote, which appeal to a heated imagination, may sometimes, although false, obtain an extensive and favourable reception from mankind. It may be laid down, however, as a general rule, that in no age, and under no combination of circumstances, while human nature remains as it is now constituted, can a volume which contains unpalatable truths, which demands sacrifices, which opposes numerous and powerful interests, and which appeals for its authority to plain matters of fact—happening at a given time and place, meet with a successful reception, unless its statements are founded in truth. Such a volume is the New Testament, and at no period, therefore, from the first to the nineteenth century, could it have gained, if false, its present commanding position.

cies which are inseparable from the different light in which different individuals are struck by the same facts. Above all, too, there breathe throughout the volume a moral dignity, an elevation of thought, a purity of aim, an abhorrence of falsehood, which render the possibility of its having been the composition of designing men a supposition so untenable, that nothing, it is to be feared, but a mind wilfully blinded against the truth could entertain it.

What we have now stated is but a mere outline of the argument; still, however, it is enough to show that the account of the miracle which we are about to consider was written by honest and sincere men, and that it was published at a time when, if false, it must have immediately been contradicted.

Such are our premises, and from them we are surely entitled to draw the conclusion that we at least have no right to impugn the veracity of the narrative given below, if contemporary writers, favoured by every circumstance which could substantiate it, and stimulated by every motive which could prompt it, failed to advance such a charge.

Eighteen centuries ago, then, we learn from the books whose genuineness we have now we hope proved, no small degree of interest was excited in the Roman province of Judea, by the presence of a remarkable personage, commonly known at that time by the appellation of "Jesus of Nazareth." This feeling was produced, in a great measure, by

a report (whether true or false we shall not now pause to inquire) that the person just named had the power of working miracles. Public attention, also, had been strongly awakened towards him by the peculiar moral and religious system which he taught, and the no less remarkable manner in which, by his personal example, he enforced the truths which he inculcated. From the accounts which have been handed down to us, indeed, we cannot wonder at a character so noble as his appears to have been, having attracted universal attention. His disposition was mild and gentle. A spirit of love diffused itself throughout all his words and actions. The poor, the afflicted, the unhappy, were the objects of his special regard. To do good, indeed, seemed to be the grand object for which he lived. A flame of pure and ardent piety continually glowed within his breast. Untinctured with asceticism, no harsh austerity clouded its sweetness; meek and lowly of heart, no spiritual pride tarnished its lustre. Virtues of the firmest kind mingled also with these softer qualities. Gentle even as the dove, he was yet undaunted in opposing vice in every form. Whatever was the rank or station of the offender, against it he raised his reproofing voice. Above all, sincerity and truth were virtues strongly recommended by the system which he taught; these, it was declared, were to be maintained under all circumstances, in all places, and at all hazards.

Attention was directed, however, to "Jesus

of Nazareth'' upon other grounds. Truths of particular solemnity at times dropped from his lips, which astonished all to whom they were addressed. He announced himself as the Son of God, the grand restorer of the human race, foretold by prophecy, and shadowed forth by type. He explained the great truths of the moral government of God, the purity of his holy law, the violation of it by mankind, the penalties which had followed its infraction, and the necessity of a substitute being found to avert them. That substitute he proclaimed himself to be. In this capacity, he foretold that he must suffer an ignominious death upon the cross: he announced, at the same time, however, the solemn truths of the immortal existence of the soul, the final judgment of the world, and the resurrection of the body, as an attestation of which he would, after three days being confined to the tomb, rise to life, and reappear to his followers. Twelve poor men, remarkable for their inoffensive lives, and the constancy with which they had followed their Master's fortunes, had long accompanied Jesus. In the simplicity of their hearts they had expected him to have bestowed temporal rewards upon them, and they were proportionably chilled and disappointed by the declaration of such unpalatable truths. They appear, indeed, to have been quite dispirited by their announcement.

It is a fact, perhaps one of the best authenticated in history, that Jesus having in-

curred the displeasure of the leading authorities of Jerusalem, by his bold denunciation of their vices, and of the populace, by his open contradiction of their national prepossessions, was crucified. One of his disciples basely betrayed him to this death, under peculiarly affecting circumstances. His other followers displayed the native timidity of their dispositions, by deserting him in the hour of danger, and fleeing from him in all directions, apprehensive, no doubt, of being involved in his punishment. In his very death, however, the lustre of his character again shone forth. Cruel and painful as it was, no murmur dropped from his lips. With divine meekness he endured the raillery of a brutal and unfeeling multitude. He prayed for his enemies. He cheered a penitent offender by pronouncing forgiveness, and with his last accents committed his departing spirit into the hands of God.

Is it probable, is it even possible, we may at this stage of the argument inquire, that a character so noble, and so unequivocally sincere, could have lent himself to a scheme of imposture?

To adhere to the narrative, however, there occurred at the period of the crucifixion circumstances which, however trifling they might appear at the time, are of considerable importance to us, who view the transaction through the medium of eighteen centuries. In examining in a strict philosophical manner the question of the resurrection, the first

point, it is clear, in support of which evidence should be adduced, is the fact of the actual death of the person asserted to have risen to life. The circumstances above alluded to furnish us with the most ample proofs upon this part of the subject. The body of Jesus, we are informed, was nailed to the cross for a whole day. Towards evening it was examined by the officers of justice in attendance upon the execution, to ascertain whether life had fled. So satisfied were they of its having done so, that they did not think it necessary to break the limbs, a practice commonly adopted towards those who suffered the punishment of crucifixion, in order to accelerate the approach of death. One of the soldiers, however, either not contented with this examination, or actuated, more probably, merely by motives of wanton barbarity, thrust his spear into the side of the corpse. From the wound thus inflicted flowed blood and water. The act appeared then trifling no doubt, and unconnected with important consequences. Our knowledge of anatomy enables us, however, to draw the conclusion, that that part of the body termed the "pericardium," had been pierced, and that a wound had therefore been inflicted sufficient of itself, without the pains of crucifixion, to have produced death. That Jesus Christ, then, when taken down from the cross, was actually dead; that the existence of life under such circumstances was an impossibility; and that therefore, if a scheme of imposture was to be carried on by

his followers, he at least could now have no share in it, are conclusions which, it must be admitted, we are from the premises fairly entitled to draw.

The death of so remarkable an individual, and under such circumstances, caused, as might have been expected, much sensation in the public mind. The prophecy, in particular, respecting his resurrection, seems to have obtained considerable circulation among the people. At once, therefore, to put an effectual stop to any attempts at delusion, the civic authorities of Jerusalem adopted what must be allowed to have been a very judicious and well-chosen measure for that purpose. They determined to watch the dead body in the strictest manner until the third day, the period assigned by Jesus for his return to life, in order, no doubt, that by then exhibiting the corpse to the populace they might at once prove the falsity of the prediction. The body was deposited in a new tomb, cut out of solid rock, a large stone was rolled against the door of the sepulchre, and a seal officially attached to it, to prevent the possibility of any tampering with it passing undetected. To complete all, a detachment of Roman soldiers, the best disciplined at that time in the world, was posted round the tomb to prevent access to it. The leading authorities of the Jews attended in person to superintend these arrangements, and from the motives with which they were actuated, we may be assured that no precautionary arrange-

ments which keen-witted men of business could suggest would be left on such an occasion unadopted. From the timidity which the disciples had so recently displayed the candid inquirer must acknowledge, that there was little probability of their attacking an armed force. Had the populace been on their side there might have been some colour for such a conjecture, but with the passions of the people inflamed against them, a project of that kind must have been no less wild than impracticable.

A question may at this part of the narrative occur to some reader, "Why did not Jesus Christ put the fact of his resurrection beyond all doubt, by rising to life publicly before the whole Jewish people, instead of selecting a few followers as the depositaries of this important miracle?" To this question we might at once reply, that, provided the evidence of the resurrection which we possess be of fair and reasonable strength, and sufficient to satisfy candid inquiry, we have no reason to complain of the absence of a higher species of testimony, revelation no less than nature working by the simplest and least expensive means. We have no occasion to waive the difficulty in this manner, however, for it will not be difficult to show, that had the miracle been performed in the public manner demanded by this question, it must not only have failed in convincing the parties before whom it would have been wrought, but at the same time have lost much, if not

all, of its efficacy upon the minds of posterity. Living, as we do, at a period when miraculous operations have ceased, we are apt to over-estimate the effects which they must have produced upon the parties before whom they were exhibited. By modernizing the subject, however, we may arrive at more sound conclusions. Were a Protestant missionary, for instance, in the present day, to raise before the Cardinals of Rome a dead person to life, and upon the strength of such an astonishing miracle, to call on them to renounce the Roman Catholic faith, to give up their wealth, to submit to self-denial in the place of self-indulgence, to undergo persecutions, and to continue until death in such an altered course of life, will it be for a moment supposed that the truth of the miracle, and the authority of the mission would be at once recognised? On the candid and sincere such an effect might be produced, but individuals addicted to the love of pleasure or of vice, would, in a superstitious city like Rome, be at no loss to assign a cause for the miracle sufficient to prevent their being convinced by it. Now it is a fact familiar to those acquainted with the history of the Jews at the period of which we are writing, that a belief in the power of magic and diabolical agency was as universally current amongst all classes of the community as the doctrines of astrology and witchcraft were in our own country a few centuries ago. To these influences, strange as it must to us appear, all the mir-

acles of Christ had been ascribed. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the resurrection, even if publicly performed, would have shared the ill success of the preceding displays of miraculous power, and that the Jewish people would have imputed its origin to the causes we have just mentioned, rather than have made the sacrifices which the new religion demanded. While the force of the miracle upon those who witnessed it would have been thus completely thrown away, the truth of it must, as we have previously stated, have lost much of its influence and efficacy upon the minds of posterity. The narrative of so remarkable an event would have been handed down to us, completely distorted by the contradictory evidence of the multitudes before whom it was performed. In addition to this, as there would, amidst such a mass of spectators, have been many unacquainted with the person of Christ, or whose view of him would have been imperfect, the question of his identity might have been altogether perplexed. Superstition and rumour, as is usual in such cases, would have added their extravagant colouring to the whole matter, so that the narrative of the resurrection, instead of having been handed down as we hope to show, on evidence, fair, clear, and harmonious, would have been transmitted to us on testimony little better than that which supports the portents and legends of the Romish Church.

It is time now, however, to return to our

narrative. On the arrival of the third day, we might naturally expect to find the civic authorities repairing to the tomb, and upon discovering the body in the same state in which it had been left by them, publicly announcing a fact so well calculated to give the death-blow to any scheme of imposture. A very different result awaits us, however. The stone is rolled away, the tomb is empty, the guards are not produced to tell their own story, but a rumour in their absence is put into circulation that they had slept upon their posts, and that the disciples had stolen the body away. Death, it is well known, was the penalty inflicted on so flagrant a violation of military law, as sleeping upon a post. No attempt appears to have been made upon this occasion, however, to bring the offenders to justice, or even to the form of a public examination. Suspicion, inconsistency, and collusion, attach themselves, it is needless to say, to the whole of this part of the transaction. That a body of armed and well-disciplined soldiery should, with the penalty of death before their eyes, have under any circumstances slept upon their posts, and all at the same time, is highly improbable; that they should have done so after the mode in which their vigilance must have been excited by the Jewish authorities, is utterly incredible. Their story bears upon its front, indeed, the mark of inconsistency, for if they were actually asleep at the time the body was abstracted, how were they enabled to

assert so positively that the disciples were the parties by whom the robbery was committed? That a few timid men, however, only eleven in number, should have ventured to attack an armed military post, defended by the best troops known at that time in the world; that they should have succeeded in rolling away the stone, and breaking open the well-secured door, without awakening any of the guards who must have been sleeping around, are suppositions extravagant, and totally untenable by any mind in an unprejudiced condition.

Another and a very different statement of the transaction is, however, submitted to our notice. The disciples whom we lately saw fleeing in all directions, apprehensive, and that not without some reason, of the fury of the mob and the civic authorities being vented upon them, now make their appearance with deeply altered characters. Their timidity is changed to moral courage, and, unappalled by the fear of consequences, they boldly announce in the most public part of Jerusalem, where the crucifixion had taken place, that their Master had fulfilled his promise of rising from the dead and appearing to them in life. On the strength of such an astonishing miracle they call on their fellow-countrymen, not (as impostors would have done) to load them with honours, and temporal possessions, but to believe in the divine mission of their Master, to repent of their sins, and to turn to a holy, a virtuous, and a self-denying

life. On being taken before the civil authorities, the guards are not confronted with them to confute their tale; on the contrary, the course pursued by authority in all ages is adopted, an endeavour, namely, is made to put down by the iron hand of persecution truths too strong to be opposed by argument. A numerous body of the Jews, including many of the upper classes, at once, however, testified their belief in the miracle, by attaching themselves to the cause, and evinced their sincerity by the costly sacrifices which they made. A second class of persons again seem to have believed the statement of the disciples, but to have been deterred by fear of consequences, from openly avowing their convictions. The majority of the Jews, however, unwilling to part with their favourite national prepossessions, and offended by the repulsive truths of the new religion, appear to have been hardened in their prejudices, and to have joined their rulers in a persecution of the followers of Christ, whose statements, although thus disliked, could not be overthrown by a fair and public examination of the question.

Were the argument in favour of the resurrection of Christ to be closed at this point, the presumption, it is clear, would be strong in favour of the narrative of the apostles, when placed in contrast with the jarring and inconsistent statement of their opponents. Presumption is changed into certainty, however, as we proceed farther in the examination of

the question. Let the disciples tell their story, and in their own manner; it will carry more conviction than the most elaborate analysis of it.

They candidly admit that when they saw their Master's remains committed to the tomb, their hearts, so far from being cheered by a belief in his prediction of again returning to life, were filled with dejection, and completely distrustful of his prophecy. The first persons, they state, to whom their Lord showed himself after rising from the dead, were a few female followers, rendered worthy of that honour by their having remained beside him, during his crucifixion, when all but one of his male adherents had shamefully fled. They ran eagerly to inform the disciples of what they had seen, but their statement, to use the expressive language of the narrative, was treated as an idle tale. On the next occasion, Jesus appeared to two of his male followers, who hastened to acquaint their brethren with the circumstance. Even this announcement, however, was received with incredulity. Shortly after this ten of the disciples, being their whole number save one, were assembled in a room together, when their doubts were dissipated by evidence too strong to resist. Their Master suddenly appeared in the midst of them. We are particularly called upon to notice this part of their narrative, and to observe how natural it is, how coherent in its various parts, and how totally devoid of all traces of enthusiastic colouring. They were

alarmed, we are informed, at first by his appearance, and were afraid that it was a spirit whom they saw before them. He calmed their apprehensions, however, and desired them to handle his person, in order to convince themselves that it was a living being with whom they were conversing. To satisfy them still more thoroughly of his identity, he pointed out the wounds which had been inflicted on the cross. He conversed familiarly and reasoned with them. He explained the Scriptures, particularly the prophetic parts, which foretold his resurrection, and gave directions for the most effectual mode of diffusing his gospel. The whole interview lasted for a considerable period. One of the disciples, we have said, was absent upon this interesting occasion. On his return, the above details were communicated to him by his brethren, but so strong was his incredulity, that he declared, that unless he saw his Master with his own eyes, and thrust his hands into the wounds inflicted on the cross, he would not believe. Even these unreasonable doubts were at last completely satisfied. In the presence of the other disciples, his Master appeared to him, gently upbraided him for his slowness of belief, and desired him to satisfy himself of the fact of his resurrection, by placing his fingers in the prints left upon his hands by the nails of the cross, and in the wound inflicted on his side by the soldier's spear. His follower, with every feeling of incredulity dissipated, knelt down

at the feet of his beloved Master, exclaiming, in the accents of mingled joy and surprise, "My Lord and my God!" words, it is needless to say, unequivocally the expressions of sincerity and truth. Upon many other occasions Jesus appeared to his disciples, but we may content ourselves by noticing, that in another instance he delivered to one of his disciples, who had deserted him in the hour of trial, a charge so full of kindness and love, that whoever peruses it must see upon it the stamp of a real transaction.

Such is the narrative of the apostles of Christ, and upon it we would only observe, that whatever opinions we may form of it, it is impossible to account for it, on the supposition of the authors being enthusiasts. The identity of the person whom they saw in their beloved Master is proved by evidence which every court of justice would admit. Their narrative is coherent in all its parts. There is a lucid statement of facts, in calm and sober language, without the slightest tinge of a heated imagination being visible in it. As no excited feeling appears in the above details, still less, we may observe, do we perceive any traces of it in the future lives or conduct of these men. The religion which they taught was no enthusiastic reverie, but a code of precepts eminently fitted to advance the practical arrangements of life. They everywhere exhort their followers to examine carefully the truths which they advance, and impress upon them the necessity

of cultivating sobriety of judgment, and "the spirit of a sound mind."

The proofs that the disciples had no motives for attempting an imposture, and that such an attempt if made by them must immediately have been put down, have been so frequently detailed in every work upon the evidences of Christianity, that we can on this occasion do little more than allude to them. The story which they told, instead of gratifying, was opposed to, the interests and prepossessions of all whom they addressed. The doctrines which they preached were then, as now, repulsive to the natural mind, from the self-denial and sacrifices which they required. Their tale was not delivered in a corner, and at a distance from the place where the events had occurred, but openly, in Jerusalem, where the facts were familiar to and fresh in the recollection of all, and where the imposture must at once have been detected. They courted not riches. The voice of ancient history confirms their declaration, that in poverty they spent their days, labouring diligently with their own hands; and that their religion, so far from being the means of temporal aggrandizement, was the cause of their being stripped of the little property they once possessed. Neither ease nor enjoyment waited on the doctrines they professed. Each step in their career alarmed new foes, and awoke fresh opposition. No incense of human applause was offered to them. They were loaded with contumely and reproach,

and accounted, to use their own language, the "filth and offscouring of the earth." They were scourged,—they were imprisoned,—they were banished; new forms of death and torture awaited them, but the recollection of the astonishing miracle which they had witnessed supported them under all. One by one their little band was thinned, by the bloody axe or agonizing cross. Their story, however, never varied; their zeal in declaring it never relaxed. During a life extended in several cases to venerable age, they maintained unaltered the narrative recorded above, and in the hour of death appealed to God, as their "faithful Creator," the witness of their truth and sincerity. Finally, let it be remembered, they thus spoke and thus suffered, not in support of abstract doctrines, which, however sincerely believed by them, might yet have been erroneous, but in support of a matter of fact, on which it was impossible that the senses of eleven men could have been deceived; in support, we repeat, of what their own eyes had seen,—their own ears heard,—their own hands handled. They suffered, that a world's attention might be called to the fact, that their Master whom they had known for years, with whose person they were familiar, had been crucified, dead, and buried, and had afterwards, upon the day foretold, reappeared to them in life. Nor were these sufferings in vain. Unaided by power, opposed by the combined prejudices of a hostile world, their simple and

honest statement wrought its way to universal credence. Before it sunk the Jewish Temple, the Heathen Fane, the Philosophic School, the Pagan Altar; while on their ruins rose the fair and graceful edifice of Christian Truth, the dispenser of light, of joy, and of happiness to a benighted world.

Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ then lives. His resurrection from the tomb was no idle legend of superstition and imposture, but a fact based on evidence beyond the power of scepticism to overthrow. If there be, therefore, any one who feels his conscience urging upon him the reception of this truth, oh! let him not strive against its dictates, but let him ask in earnest, childlike, humble prayer for true faith, to have his prejudices overcome, his ignorance enlightened, and his difficulties removed. Before the awful tribunal of the Son of God, let him be assured we must all, small and great, stand to receive our final doom. Let him cast himself then with deep self-aborrence on the compassion of his Lord, while he yet remains as an Advocate and High Priest, gentle and easy to be entreated, and before he assumes the character of the Eternal Judge, the Arbiter of everlasting joy or wo.

CHAPTER VII.

“How charming is Divine philosophy,
Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo’s lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

MILTON.

WE have approached at last the portals of the temple which contains the records of the will of God. Reason has conducted us to this point of our investigations in safety. It must now surrender up to faith, however, its capacity of guide, and enter the inner shrine of Christianity with the meek and lowly feelings of the disciple who has all to learn. Humility, deep, settled humility, is again, we would repeat, alone the disposition with which we can now pursue our researches. “Secret things belong unto the Lord your God,” “What ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter,” are inscriptions on the temple, which arrest the attention wherever we direct our glance. To drop the language of allegory, however, let the sincere inquirer, in opening the pages of Scripture, and perusing the revelation of his heavenly Father, labour to obtain that humble and docile spirit which so much endears a dutiful child to an earthly parent. Let him remember, indeed, that

though Christianity condescends to entreat him to adopt such a spirit, she is now entitled to lay aside the attitude of a suppliant, and to assume the language of command. The subjects which he now approaches, like the natural phenomena before alluded to, are situated beyond the grasp of his imperfect faculties. To receive them aright, the understanding, hard as may be the effort, must humble itself down. Faith has produced her credentials for exacting such a concession from reason, and analogy has explained the wisdom and kindness on which such a mode of instruction rests. Were the truths then in this chapter to be utterly mysterious, that circumstance could form no ground for their rejection. The question for consideration alone would be, did Jesus Christ in person declare them or sanction their utterance by others? He proclaimed himself to be a messenger sent from God. By the miracle of the resurrection which we have just examined, he established his claims to that office, and he is entitled, therefore, even on points beyond our reason, to demand the most cheerful and implicit belief. Unlike all impostors, however, he has been slow to strain his power. Where he might command, he entreats; where he might dictate, he explains; where he might drag by force, he draws with cords of love. Let the sincere inquirer, then, determine not to be startled by seeming difficulties, and let him prepare himself for much that, in spite of every attempt at explanation, must appear

obscure to his limited apprehension. Happy, thrice happy, are they who in earnest prayer solicit such a spirit. Soon shall they find their natural darkness exchanged for increased and ever-increasing light. In this chapter we hope to trespass but briefly on the reader's patience, it being our intention to do little more than present an outline of the main truths of Christianity, stripping them of the fallacies with which they are generally interwoven in the sceptical mind.

The first declaration of Scripture to which we shall advert, is one which addresses itself too strongly to our hopes of future happiness, to incur any risk of being disputed. "God is love." The language of nature and of revelation on this point coincides. As in examining the former we are amazed and overpowered by the displays of benevolent design which burst upon our view, so in approaching the latter, we are cheered and delighted by the expressions of good will towards our race, which drop from its pages. Happiness, so far as consistent with his attributes, universal happiness, seems from both the volumes of creation and Scripture to be the final aim of the designs of the all-gracious Jehovah. To co-operate with him in his appointed means for working out the fulfilment of these designs, is mentioned in revelation as the grand privilege of our race, and is termed, in the language of Scripture, "glorifying," or, "living to the glory of God."

It would be pleasing to many of our read-

ers were love the only attribute of God which Scripture revealed. In common with the pages of nature, however, revelation proceeds to develop the character of the Supreme Being as the moral Governor of the universe which he has created—as the rewarder of virtue—the punisher of vice. The justice of God is therefore a more awful attribute of his character to consider. The Almighty, it must be evident, even to the most superficial observer, has constituted this world dependent on certain laws, which it is requisite for his creatures, in a greater or less degree, to understand, before they can provide for their happiness. Of late years these laws have attracted considerable attention, but the result of inquiries into them has been too much mingled with theory to confer many solid additions to the happiness of mankind. It is from Scripture alone that we can gather any really practical information, respecting the moral rules by which the Creator intended our temporal and eternal felicity to be promoted. So much indeed of the sacred volume refers to what is generally termed the “moral law of God,” that our attention seems not unnaturally drawn to it at this part of our subject.

From revelation then we learn the fact, that our Creator has furnished us with a rule of life, admirably adapted to promote our happiness, and to enhance our views of the wisdom and benevolence of the glorious Being by whom it was framed. The law in

question comprehends two divisions of duties, those which connect man with his Creator, and those which subsist between man and his fellow-creatures. It is better known, however, as subdivided into ten sections, an order to which we shall adhere in our present illustration of the subject.

The first branch of this law demands supreme love to God, a duty which nature points out as most reasonable, considering the unwearied bounty of our great Benefactor.

The second branch guards against the tendency which mankind has in every age displayed of abusing the religious faculty, by the introduction of idolatrous worship, with the cruel and debasing rites which follow in its train.

The third branch prescribes a deep reverence, respect, and love, towards the name of God. By associating such grateful emotions with every mention of the title of the supreme Being, this commandment is powerfully fitted to increase and strengthen our virtuous resolutions and efforts.

The fourth branch assigns a certain period for reposing from the cares and the business of life, and devoting ourselves more immediately to the worship and service of God. The voice of every nation which this institution has reached attests the consummate wisdom and benevolence with which it has been devised.

The fifth branch enforces the observance

of the parental, the social, and all the amiable ties of life.

The sixth branch enforces the love of our neighbour, by not only opposing all designs of violence or malevolence against him, but by forbidding the entertainment of even an unkind thought towards him.

The seventh branch promotes the happiness of the human race, by confining within the bounds of purity all the relations of the sexes.

The eighth branch demands the most scrupulous regard for our neighbour's property and rights of every description, forbidding not only the violation of them by open force or secret fraud, but requiring us by all means of a lawful nature to advance them.

The ninth branch maintains the preservation of peace and good will towards our fellow-creatures, by prohibiting all untrue, all slanderous, and all unkind expressions towards them.

The tenth and concluding branch of the law of God ensures the harmony of society, by demanding grateful contentment with our lot, as having been arranged in accordance with the views of Infinite Wisdom. It represses in the bud also the germ of public or private dissensions, by forbidding the existence of all envious and repining feelings at the superior advantages and enjoyments of our fellow-creatures.

The Divine law, we may further observe, prescribes a perfect obedience. It denounces

not only the violation of it in action, but condemns even the infraction of it in thought. Let not these restrictions, however, be considered as unnecessarily harsh and severe. If evil thoughts be suppressed in the bud, evil actions will of course with infallible certainty be restrained; if permitted to pass unchecked, however, no limits can be assigned to the sphere of their injurious influence. In the following lines, the poet has perceived the application of this reasoning even to human laws, how much more appropriate then must it be to the Divine code?

“No, scoffer, no! Attend, and mark with awe,
There is no wicket in the gate of law;
He that would e'er so lightly set ajar
That awful portal must undo each bar;
Tempting occasion, habit, passion, pride,
Will join to storm the breach and force the barrier
wide.”*

Various as the precepts are which compose the Divine law, “they may all of them, we would further observe, be traced up to two grand seminal principles, love to the will of God, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves. The comprehensive range of these motives is in general but little understood. When followed through all their ramifications, however, they may be said to form the key to the moral government of God. Were their operation indeed to exist perfectly in

* Scott.

every human breast, misery would immediately be at an end. Each person supremely desirous of pleasing his Creator would but wait to know his will, to execute it with alacrity and delight. Each person, too, loving his neighbour as himself, (which is indeed but a branch of the former duty,) the reign of selfishness would cease. There would be no fraud, no violence, no injustice; an age more truly golden than that of the poet would return, and peace, and joy, and happiness, again revisit the earth.

It is not only, however, to the contracted sphere of action which this world exhibits that these principles extend; in their scope they embrace the moral universe of God. Supreme love to their Creator, and the love of their neighbour as themselves, are principles of action as applicable to an angel or a seraph as to a man. Wherever, indeed, a world of moral agents exists, these two rules must be the germ from which all their obedience and all their happiness spring. Could we soar through the vast expanse of infinity, from star to star, and from planet to planet, we might find, if modern theories of astronomy be true, each to be teeming with myriads of intelligent beings. We might find the commandments given to such worlds to be widely different in details from those which have been communicated to us, because the circumstances in which their inhabitants would be placed might be altogether the reverse of our own. In a commu-

nity where there was no property, a law against stealing would be unnecessary, and in one where the relation of parent and child did not exist, the fifth precept of our code would, in the letter at least, be uncalled for and unknown. Endlessly diversified, however, as the rules which governed each system might be, we could find no happy world, where love to God and love to their neighbour would not be the two seminal principles from which all their laws would spring. Well then might the tongue of inspiration proclaim, "love is the fulfilling of the law." Oh sight more noble than even imagination can conceive!—a universe encircled by the golden chain of love; each part, by the operation of this simple motive moulded into perfect symmetry, and the mighty whole revolving with a graceful harmony, of which the music of the spheres was but an imperfect emblem.

This explanation may help us to understand the reason why, throughout Scripture, such importance is attached to the motives from which actions are performed. Let us suppose, for instance, two individuals to observe the commandments, the one from the principle of love to God and his neighbour, the other from regard to his own interests. In the eyes of society the actions which flowed from these motives might appear equally excellent. Often, indeed, those springing from the latter principle might seem more laudable than those which originated from

the former. Let us suppose, however, that after death, the two individuals were removed to another world, the commandments of which were totally different in detail from those which existed here. The one person it is evident could immediately adapt himself to the laws of his new society, because he had accustomed himself all along to act on the two grand motives from which the laws in question would spring. The other person, however, would be totally unfitted for obedience in such a state of being, or indeed in any happy world throughout the moral creation of God. He had gone through a round of external actions, fair indeed in the eyes of his fellow-creatures, but he had never during the period of his probation been acquiring those habits which could fit him to fall in and harmonize with God's government. Nor could such habits be acquired in a future state. "Where the tree falls, there it must lie." In the spiritual no less than in the natural world, there is a tide in the affairs of men, which if lost cannot be regained. He that sows not in spring will fruitlessly seek to do so in winter. He that neglects the opportunities of youth will in vain sigh for them in old age; and he that squanders away the seed-time of eternity will unavailingly wish to recal it in a final state of existence.

Admirably adapted then for the promotion of happiness as the Divine law must be admitted to be, an inquiry of some importance presents itself, to what cause is the almost

universal disregard of it by our race to be attributed? A theory exists that we are slowly but progressively advancing to a more perfect moral condition, and that when the exquisite adaptation of our Creator's laws to our position upon earth is perceived, they will be much more extensively obeyed. The testimony of all ages opposes this theory, and the experience of our own day lends no sanction to it. The phenomenon is accounted for, however, in Scripture, in a manner less soothing to our imagination, and more unpalatable to our pride. We are in that volume informed, that our race originally sprang from one common federal head; that the moral law was given to him as representing his future descendants; that his powers were perfectly able to keep it, and that had he done so, the happiness of himself and his posterity would have been insured. Having broken this law, however, mankind, we are farther informed, have remained, and must ever remain, incapable of perfectly obeying it. It must be candidly admitted that the mind is at first sight appalled, by the circumstance of so many myriads of our race being thus ruined by the misconduct of a progenitor removed from us by the intervention of five thousand years. That Scripture assures us of the fact, in the most explicit terms, will be to the humble a sufficient reason for their belief in this important truth. Nature itself, however, presents us with analogies which throw considerable light on this confessedly

mysterious arrangement of the all-wise Creator. Students of ethical science have long since traced a provision in the moral system of the universe, entitled of late years, the "Hereditary Law." It is in accordance with it, that parents of a healthy constitution of body transmit a similar advantage to their offspring, whilst by it also, the debauchee sends down the fruits of his diseases and his sins, even to a third and fourth generation. The operation of this law is not confined to individuals only—its results extend even to nations. Our own happy country reaps the labours of wise, pious, and industrious ancestors, while less favoured lands around us suffer the miseries entailed upon them by the rapacity, the improvidence, and the injustice of progenitors removed from them by the intervention of centuries. The existence of this hereditary law has seldom indeed been denied by mankind, but the assertion of divines, that it was founded on benevolence, has been much less generally admitted. A corroboration of the views of theologians, however, has recently been received from a quarter where it was least of all, perhaps, to have been expected. An author, for instance, whom we have more than once had occasion to refer to, as being, whatever were his faults, by no means prejudiced in favour of superstition,* has ingeniously shown that the law in question decidedly tends to advance the

* Mr. Combe.

happiness of our race. But for its operation, he maintains, nations as well as individuals must have remained in a state of barbarism, since each generation would have begun anew for itself the career of improvement, instead of starting from that point to which its ancestors had previously attained. The hereditary law too, he asserts, is greatly conducive to public, no less than private, virtue; for if the principle be once admitted, that the welfare of our descendants is interwoven with our own conduct, that community and that person must be selfish indeed, on whose practice such a consideration would not exercise a beneficial influence. More happiness than misery also, the same writer contends, is, upon the whole, produced by this law. If it cannot be denied, for instance, that disease is frequently sent down by means of it, it ought also to be remembered, that that disease bears no proportion to the health which is transmitted through the same channel. On the correctness, or otherwise, of these conclusions, we shall not here pronounce any opinion. We call upon the numbers, however, who have embraced the views of the amiable, but in some points, deeply misguided author who advances them, to explain how, if the law in question be benevolent in its operation as regards individuals, as regards families, and as regards nations, the wisdom or the goodness of God can be challenged for having, in a mode exactly analogous, fixed the happiness of the human race,

according to the conduct of its federal head. The child, whose parent has sent him down a healthy constitution of body, sees no injustice in the law which has secured him that important advantage; the community too which reaps in tranquillity the fruits of the exertions of wise and enterprising ancestors, is equally satisfied with its justice. Had our world then stood in happiness through the obedience of its primal head, instead of falling in consequence of that progenitor's misconduct, there would, we may safely assert, have been no murmur at the economy which had transmitted to us the blessings of a sinless state of existence.

An attentive examination of the powers of the human mind enables us to perceive their original adaptation for perfectly keeping the Divine law. We see religious and moral faculties given to us, adapted to love God and our neighbour, and the exercise of which was intended to constitute our supreme happiness. We perceive, also, intellect, affections, and passions, designed to act in subservience to those higher powers, with conscience as a vicegerent, and judgment as a counsellor to direct the whole. The history of our race but too plainly proves that this glorious mental constitution has in some mysterious manner been overthrown. Scripture coincides in this view of the subject, and informs us that the human mind has fallen from that perfect condition in which it was originally created. This doctrine has been a fertile

theme for the ridicule of the thoughtless, but it is one in strict accordance with the deductions of all true mental philosophy. To judge, indeed, from the language of those who oppose the doctrine of Scripture on this subject, it might be supposed that that volume represented the human mind as having lost faculties which it originally possessed, as having obtained others which did not form a part of its primary structure, and as being now a complete chaos, without arrangement, proportion, or beauty. Although we would desire to speak with diffidence on points where it is difficult to arrive at certain conclusions, yet we think we may venture with safety to assert, that there is nothing in the language of revelation to countenance these views. The human mind, we have reason to believe, remains, as regards the *number* of its powers, in the same state in which it came from the hands of God, and is still admirably adapted to the external condition of nature in which it is placed. The corruption which Scripture ascribes to it is the proneness of its powers to run into abuse,—their tendency to act at variance with each other instead of moving in harmony, and in obedience to the voice of conscience,—and above all, their total and complete inability to keep, even imperfectly, one precept of that holy and Divine law of love which we have before explained. The passions, for instance, would still be useful, if kept within their proper bounds. They have broken, however, from

their limits, and obtained the mastery over the internal monitor, which, instead of commanding, has been forced to obey. The judgment, blinded by these passions, has lost its clearness of moral perception. The affections, which were designed not only to love man, but to have a higher range, and to fix themselves upon God, have stopped short, as it were at the first point, being unable to regard with complacency a Being whose commands they were conscious of disobeying. Each faculty, too, having thrown off the authority of conscience, now seeks its own gratification. That, however, cannot be attained without wounding some other power equally bent upon exclusive indulgence. The reign of peace and harmony is, therefore, over, and anarchy and confusion have succeeded. Like some fair ship, indeed, whose crew has risen into lawless mutiny, the soul, tempest driven, hurries along the troubled ocean of life. Its commander is in chains; its pilot lies drugged by opiates; its lights are extinguished; its compass is lost; and thus chartless, courseless, rudderless, it plunges madly along, though the sunken rock, the hidden reef, and the breakers' roar threaten each moment its destruction. Although thus fallen, however, man (to vary the illustration) still remains a noble ruin. The shattered remains, indeed, of his perverted mental powers, like the fragments of some ancient temple, attest the massive grandeur and exquisite proportions of the original structure. With our race still

remains the capacity to form the high resolve, and to admire in theory the better path, although in practice it realizes the complaint of the poet—

“Meliora
Video—atque probo; deteriora sequor,”

so truly, although unintentionally, translated by an inspired writer—

“What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.”

From human nature, thus radically vitiated, corrupted, and degraded, fruits correspondingly deteriorated have sprung. Selfishness and wickedness have marked the career of mankind in every age, and converted a once blooming Eden into an abode, in many respects, of misery and sorrow.

The great Dispenser of happiness, the moral Governor of the universe, cannot be supposed to view with complacency the subversion of his adorable plans for the promotion of the well-being of our race. The light in which he regards the misconduct of his creatures, and the plans which he has formed for restraining and correcting it, deserve, therefore, next our notice.

The declarations of Scripture on this point are abundantly clear and decisive. We are by them informed that the slightest violation of the Divine law, whether in thought or in deed, is most offensive in the sight of God.

Such violation is termed sin. Few things are of more importance than to entertain correct conceptions of the meaning of this term. The expression, "vice," so frequently made use of by moralists, by no means conveys its full force to the mind. Almost all writers on ethics reprobate the latter quality solely on account of its obvious tendency to impair the temporal happiness of the individual, or the community by which it is committed. Offences, therefore, according to this standard, are viewed as heinous or trifling, exactly in proportion as they militate, or otherwise, against the private or general welfare. Murder, robbery, forgery, are strongly condemned, for instance, as having obviously the former tendency; but it would be considered a very precise system of morals indeed which took cognisance of evil thoughts, or of those minor derelictions which, although in theory indefensible, apparently exercise little direct influence upon the well-being of ourselves or others. It is scarcely to be wondered that persons who have been accustomed to view the above estimate of morality as a correct one, should be surprised at the different standard by which actions are tried in Scripture. "Envyings, revelings, and drunkenness," they will find classed by that volume in the same category with murder; and they will discover also, severe consequences to be denounced against actions in themselves innocent, simply because they have been performed under certain circumstances. A little ex-

planation, however, is alone required to convince us that the scriptural standard is the correct one. Throughout the whole of Revelation, the most careless reader must have observed, that although virtue is sometimes recommended from its being obviously conducive to our temporal welfare, and sin reprobated from its having an exactly opposite tendency, yet that these considerations are never represented as deserving a higher position than subordinate motives of action. The leading ground, on the contrary, on which we are ordered to cultivate the one and shun the other, is because the former is obedience, and the latter disobedience, to the will of God. Supreme love to the commands of our Creator, and the love of our neighbour as ourselves, we have before seen to be the two grand elementary principles by which the happiness of God's moral creation is secured. The love of our neighbour, however, being but a branch of love to the will of God, it follows that on strict adherence to this latter motive the welfare of our vast and stupendous universe depends. We are, of course, unable to explain the mode in which our actions here exert an influence upon other systems. Before we could understand that point aright, we would require to know the laws which regulate spiritual beings. "We are," says a writer, whom we have more than once had occasion to quote,* "but

* Wilberforce.

an atom in the universe. Worlds upon worlds surround us, all full of intelligent creatures to whom now or hereafter we may be a spectacle, and afford an example of the Divine procedure. Who, then, shall take upon him to pronounce what might be the issue if sin were suffered to pass unpunished in one corner of this universal empire? Who shall say what might be the consequence, what disorder it might spread through the creation of God?"

The guilt of sin, then, is not to be estimated by its temporal and local effects, but by its tendency to violate that law of obedient love on which the welfare of the moral universe depends. Each act of it destroys, to a certain extent, that cementing power which knits countless worlds in harmony, and unlooses a link in that golden chain which encircles creation.

The manner in which our Creator has determined to arrest the progress of this dangerous principle is the part of the subject which more particularly demands our solemn and serious attention. At no part of our inquiries is it more necessary to remind our readers of the necessity which exists for receiving with deep and settled humility the declarations of God's word, however unpalatable they may appear. It is here that we must lay our foundations, and according as we shall do so, carelessly or prudently, will the superstructure be found tottering or secure. We are assured, then, that each act of sin

demands as its just punishment the displeasure of God, perpetual alienation from his favour, and the suffering of everlasting wo. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it shall die." "The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment"—into "fire"—even "everlasting fire"—"which shall never be quenched." Those who remember the anguish with which such appalling expressions once filled their own breasts, will feel too deeply for that unhappy class of their fellow creatures who still remain exposed to their denunciation, to dwell upon the subject one moment longer than a sense of duty would demand. If the danger be not faithfully pointed out, however, the true remedy will either not be sought, or will be solicited in a manner too careless to secure it.

Heart-rending, then, as these expressions are, we dare not lessen their force by explaining their meaning away. Tremendous as the idea of eternal suffering is, who may presume to question its consistency with the wisdom and benevolence of God? Before we can understand this subject aright, we must wait till in a higher state of existence we comprehend the unlimited range of creation, the nature of the divine attributes, the destructive tendency of sin, and the necessity of an example being made to the rest of the moral creation of God. It is particularly necessary carefully to warn our readers on this subject, because of late years many false,

though plausible theories have been hazarded respecting the nature and duration of the Divine punishments. Proteus-like, these theories have assumed every form: their general tendency, however, may be summed up in the doctrine that all penalties inflicted by God must be intended to produce reformatory effects on the sufferer. As, according to this system, offenders are to be viewed solely as moral patients, retributory punishments, it is contended, must be improper, as springing from those vindictive feelings in our nature which cannot be ascribed to the Almighty. That the generality of the Divine afflictions in this world are intended (though they often fail in effecting that object) to produce reformatory effects on the sufferer, we shall not attempt to deny. Scripture itself harmonizes with this view of the subject, and assures us that the sufferings with which the Almighty permits his creatures to be visited upon earth are sent from motives of the purest love to bring the offender back, if possible, to the paths of happiness and obedience. This, however, (and the fallacy of modern theories lies in overlooking this point,) is nothing more than a temporary arrangement, suitable, indeed, to a probationary state, but from which we can draw no conclusions as to the widely altered condition of matters which may be necessary in a final and eternal existence. The theory, that the sting of retribution ought to be extracted from all punishments is a

similar mixture of truth and error. It is true, for instance, (and we would bless God for the fact,) that Christianity enjoins us to view even the greatest offenders with sympathy and pity, as inheritors with ourselves of a fallen and corrupted nature. It is true, also, that owing to the benign influence of the Gospel, the criminal code of every country which it has visited has been mitigated and relaxed. Whilst Christianity has thus, however, if not actually denied, at least greatly restricted, the right of mankind to administer retributive punishments, it has never done so on the ground that such punishments were improper, but because God, and not man, was the author, and eternity, not time, the scene for their infliction. By such wretched sophistries as these, however, men seek a false peace, and drive the disease from the surface to the vitals, instead of applying for the only sure and infallible remedy. The voice of conscience proclaims the demerits of sin in every breast, and the law of God confirms its awful premonitions and warnings. The Gospel alone can point the way to Him who has power to heal the broken spirit, and who has invited all, without exception, who are "weary and heavy laden," to find "rest to their souls" by taking up his light and easy yoke.

On subjects so high and mysterious as those which we have above been examining, there exists in the present day but too much

of that proud spirit of which the poet complained when he asserted that—

“Fools rush in
Where angels fear to tread.”

Questions of this nature, it must be remembered, are to be decided, not by the fallible deductions of our limited reason, but by the unerring declarations of GOD'S WORD! Tremendous and appalling as the thought of everlasting punishment undoubtedly is, the good of the universe, the preservation of God's moral creatures in happiness, the perfection of the Divine attributes, demand, we may be assured, the infliction of such a penalty. God, however, has no delight in the destruction of a sinner. “As I live,” says his word, “I have no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked.” His bowels yearn over the returning prodigal.—He receives him with overflowing love. What he has denounced against sin, however, he will one day, we may be assured, execute, for “God is not a man that he should lie, but ‘TRUTH,’ without variableness or shadow of turning.”

With us, however, life yet remains, and within our grasp still lie the white robes of victory, and the crown of unfading glory. Instead, then, of wasting our energies on questions far beyond the grasp of the human intellect, let us cast ourselves as helpless sinners at the feet of that gracious Being who came to seek and to save what was lost; let

us, in fervent and unwearied prayer, place our complaints, our difficulties, and our sorrows before him. His yoke is indeed easy; his burden is truly light. He will dry our falling tears — He will staunch our bleeding wounds, and guide us from this vale of sorrow to regions of unclouded day.

CHAPTER VIII.

“—————The Cross—

There no delusive hope invites despair—
 No mockery meets you—no deception there.
 The spells and charms that blinded you before,
 All vanish there, and fascinate no more.”

COWPER.

WE have had occasion more than once, as we advanced in our subject, to impress upon our readers the necessity of deep and settled humility in prosecuting those points of inquiry which lie within the province of Faith. In the doctrines which we are in this chapter about to consider, it is more than ever essential to call for this meek and lowly spirit. We have gradually wound our way from the base to the very summit of the heights of theological inquiry. The path which we are now to tread is a dizzy one, and with humility alone can we pass those precipices where the giddy spirit of Pride would be unable to maintain its footing. We approach, too, a class of subjects where the reader must be content with truth in its plain and simple form, without the decoration of novelty. To many, indeed, the contents of this chapter will, from their constant recurrence in the pulpit and religious works, appear trite and common-place. Such readers must remem-

ber, however, the darkness which has settled down upon the sceptical mind, and recollect that the announcement to it of the simplest scriptural truths is often the source of as much wonder and surprise, as if they had for the first time been promulgated to the world.

The position then, in which in our last chapter we described the human race as having been left, was a sufficiently alarming one. The Divine law had been broken by our common ancestor. In virtue of that hereditary arrangement, the equity of which we have before explained, his descendants were involved in his ruin. The penalties attendant upon the infraction of God's moral code had been denounced, the justice of the Almighty had been pledged to witness their execution, and nothing remained to prevent them from being carried into effect. We are apt indeed to suppose, that at this juncture, the mercy of God was bound to have provided a remedy for the multitude of his creatures, who had been involved in ruin by the misconduct of their ancestral head. There is nothing, however, in the language of Scripture to warrant us in drawing so flattering a conclusion. Every thing, on the contrary, leads us to believe, that had the sentence of the violated law been inflicted on our race, the benevolence of God would still, in the eyes of his moral creation, have remained unimpeachable. The condemnation indeed to misery of our little globe, as an example to the vast amount of obedient worlds which probably

surround us, would have caused, we may be assured, no more disarrangement to the general system, than the destruction of a leaf, teeming with its mass of microscopic life, would to the forest of whose vegetation it forms a part. Let us freely admit, that in all this there is something mysterious; but let us at the same time remember how limited is our apprehension of the designs of Infinite Wisdom. In the schemes indeed which our fancy is apt to suggest, as modes by which the ruin of our race might have been averted, we resemble but too much the child, who should offer his feeble advice for the readjustment of some intricate machinery, which it perplexed the wisdom of its artificer to restore to order and harmony. In striking contrast to our short-sighted views upon the subject, appear the declarations of Scripture respecting the mode in which the Supreme Disposer of events regarded the confusion which had been introduced into creation by sin. His mercy is represented as struggling with his justice; his character of Judge of the universe, demanding the punishment of the guilty, and the affection of the parent pleading for their release.* Never, perhaps,

* It may be said, we are aware, that as God was omnipotent, he might at once have devised some scheme for the complete pardon of our race. To this we would simply observe, that God is indeed all-powerful, but that he only exerts this power, in a mode consistent with his other attributes. The Queen of England might to-morrow, in virtue of the prerogative of mercy vested in the Crown, liberate every prisoner through-

until in a future state of existence we know more fully the Divine nature, shall we be able fully to understand this subject. Even in this world, however, the humble observer may perceive analogies, which to a considerable extent throw light upon the question. Let us suppose, for instance, as has been well observed,* the murder of some degraded Hindoo, to have been committed in a small village of a distant province in British India; and that the inhabitants were to say, "the place is not much known,—the party murdered was little worth,—it will be the most prudent plan to hush the matter up." Every one must see that this could not be permitted; that the law of Britain must step forward, that it must vindicate its authority, and teach even a petty hamlet and a remote dependency, that they were portions of a vast community. Any other course, it is evident, would in time communicate the infection of insubordination, from an almost unknown district, to every part of a mighty empire. In exactly the same mode does the analogy hold good with spiritual objects. The Divine law had

out her dominions. In a legal sense, she has perfect *power* to take such a step; still, however, regard to her other qualities as Monarch as effectually prevents the exercise of that *power*, as if it did not exist. We notice this objection, because it is frequently heard in the mouths of individuals, but we must deprecate, at the same time, that spirit of pride in which, it is to be feared, it originates.

* For this illustration, the writer is indebted to a sermon, by the Rev. T. Binney.

been violated. The spot, no doubt, in which that disobedience had been exhibited, was a small one, and the circumstance which had called it forth, might also appear to be a trifling one; still, however, an example of rebellion had been given to the moral intelligences which surround us. The law of holy love, obedience to which was the source of all their happiness, had been violated, and a principle had been introduced which threatened, if unchecked, to spread from system to system, and to change into jarring confusion that fair and graceful harmony in which this stupendous universe revolves.

Be these speculations as they may, however, the danger to which sin had exposed our race is continually represented in Scripture as having been most imminent, and as having required a remedy of a proportionately costly character. Well then may the mind sink down in wonder, adoration, and awe, as on proceeding farther to unfold the sacred volume, it learns the nature of that scheme by which the Almighty interposed to avert the destruction of our race. **JEHOVAH HIMSELF DESCENDED UPON EARTH, *assumed the form of his creature, and to reconcile his justice with his mercy, suffered himself the punishments denounced by his violated law.*** Well may it now be asked, where is the littleness of sin, when a remedy so overwhelmingly vast was necessary? How great must have been the danger where an interference so costly was requisite; and how

truly infatuated must be that conduct which trifles with a system recommended by a sanction so awful! Preparatory to revealing this mode of rescuing us from our danger, Scripture discloses a truth, to the discovery of which our unassisted faculties could never have attained;—the existence, namely, of three Divine Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, the Father—the Son—the Holy Ghost. As this doctrine is confessedly one of the most mysterious truths of theology, it would be indeed wild presumption were we, to whom the meanest object in nature suggests matter for humility, to be startled by the difficulties which attend the reception of it. The practical results connected with it will better reward our attention. The Second Person then in this Trinity—the only-begotten Son of God, equal in power and glory to God, was so moved, we are informed, with compassion at our danger, that of his own free-will, though in accordance with that of his Father, he offered to leave the throne of the universe, to assume our fallen nature, and to present in his person a sacrifice for sin, through which our race might be restored to happiness, and to the Divine favour.

In due time as we have seen in a preceding chapter, this gracious Being appeared upon earth, and, after a life of unexampled benevolence, endured upon the cross the penalties to which we lay exposed. He proclaimed himself the dispenser of pardon to the whole human race; he invited all, how-

ever laden with sin and crime, to throw themselves upon his compassion and love, and offered a full, a free, and unqualified remission of their guilt, on the simple condition of their believing from the heart in the promises, the declarations, the warnings, and the threatenings of his Gospel. The simplicity of this scheme has, in every age, staggered the proud and thoughtless classes of mankind; it is, however, the very quality which most strongly, from its analogy with the other works of God, marks its Divine origin. The obscurity which generally prevails on this part of the subject arises from confounding the pretended belief of nominal Christians, with the heartfelt faith of the true followers of the Gospel. The true Christian, for instance, who trembles at the threatenings, and rejoices at the promises of God's word, who rejects no portion of it as uninspired, but considers it all as the precious revelation of his Father's will, finds immediately an impulse communicated to all his moral faculties, producing infallibly the fruits of a holy and virtuous life. On the other hand, the nominal Christian who reads Scripture with indifference, who takes what portion he chooses as Divine, and rejects whatever part of it is opposed to his preconceived notions, feels no such influence as we have spoken of communicated to his powers of action, but remains, however high his pretensions to faith, completely destitute of its life-giving properties. Confidence in and love to Christ form an essential part of the true

faith we have above described, and on this subject Scripture has furnished us with the most copious instructions for our procedure. It directs the sinner with overflowing gratitude to the unmerited goodness of God, for having excited such penitential desires in his breast, to throw himself with deep self-loathing and abhorrence at the feet of his Saviour, as alone able and willing to relieve him of the burden of his guilt. The sick, the diseased, the helpless, during our Lord's mission on earth, never solicited his aid in vain. We are assured that these miserable objects were true types of our spiritual condition, and that they were intended to lead us to the perception of our need of the great Physician's aid. As we can no longer, however, with the bodily eye behold our gracious Benefactor, we are commanded to practise the duty of prayer, and are assured, that if we persevere in this delightful exercise, we shall, sooner or later, by having the blessing we solicit imparted to us, perceive that our Saviour has not been far removed from us. It will perhaps be expected, that we should here pause to examine the vain and short-sighted objections with which this duty has been assailed by modern scepticism. We must be permitted, however, to waive the discussion of this subject. If, up to this point of our inquiries, we have failed to make our way to the hearts of our readers, we should in vain endeavour by any arguments, to satisfy him of the propriety of the duty in question. To those

however, who have been in any degree awakened to the importance of eternal things, we would recal the illustration, so well applied by a pious writer,* of the philosopher who, by simply rising up and walking, practically refuted the elaborate sophistries of an opponent, who contended that there could be no such property as motion. In a similar manner, to retire to the secrecy of our closet, to pour out our various wants before a gracious Heavenly Father, and to feel by actual experience the blessed results springing from this practice, will be found by the serious inquirer a far more satisfactory proof of the efficacy of prayer, than the most elaborate metaphysical argument in support of it. The prayer, however, to which Scripture has promised such important results, is not an empty form of words, but the language of the heart; prayer, proceeding from the inmost recesses of the soul; prayer, like the cry of the shipwrecked mariner, with every faculty and energy awakened to a sense of our danger, during the period of a probation for eternity.

The fruits which the word of God justifies us in expecting from persevering prayer, poured out in the fervent manner we have been just describing, are a deep loathing and abhorrence of our sins, a perception of the beauty and excellence of the moral law of God, a deep feeling of the Almighty's long-suffering towards us, with a contrite and

* Hannah More. See her Treatise on Prayer.

penitential sense of the base ingratitude with which we have repaid his love. We shall no longer be able to treat our offences as matters of little moment, but shall see them in their full enormity, as unspeakably offensive to the spotless purity of God, and as justly deserving the punishments he has denounced against them. We shall not only be ready, but even anxious to make full satisfaction or restitution where we have done amiss, with a deep and filial conviction, however, that our heavenly Father will not call us at first to difficulties beyond our strength, but that we shall be led, step by step, till every obstacle is overcome. We shall cling to the feet of Christ, with full confidence in his love, determined, if we must perish, to perish in that position. The moral effulgence which shines round his character will render him in our eyes, "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." We shall give ourselves up to his service, determined in his strength to wage war against sin in every form. In such a service we shall prepare ourselves for difficulties, but treading in our Master's footsteps, we shall be ready at his call to part with fortune, reputation, and life itself, in the full assurance that even in this world we shall be supported by heavenly consolations, with which a stranger intermeddeth not. We shall acknowledge the reasonableness of that precept which commands us to love our supreme Benefactor with all our heart and strength. We shall prize his word,

his house, his Sabbath, and shall feel every duty sweetened by its being performed with a view to the extension of the knowledge of his love. Our Saviour will be selected as our example, and it will henceforth be our delight to find ourselves gradually transformed into his image, by diligently, through Divine aid, cultivating those graces which shone so conspicuously in his character. It will be our daily struggle to make advances in the paths of virtue and holiness, never contented with our attainments, but pressing on towards perfection. This altered course of thought and action, however, must not be attempted only for a time, but selected as our deliberate and permanent choice for life. We shall prepare ourselves for difficulties, requiring patience, energy, and resolution, to overcome; and we shall, above all, remembering that we are wholly indebted for our attainments to the unmerited goodness of God, "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," as knowing that we are surrounded with dangers, and ever standing on the verge of an eternal world.

Such are but a few of the peculiar tempers and graces which will be wrought in all who solicit them in earnest and persevering prayer. Although the experience of Christians may differ as regards some of the minor points just enumerated, yet in essentials the process we have described will be found to bear a resemblance to what has passed in the breast of every true believer. It is indeed easy to

assert that the whole is nothing more than the conception of a few men of heated imaginations, but it is much more difficult to prove such an unwarranted assertion. Multitudes of persons in the present day are ready to attest that after having practised the duty of prayer, results exactly similar to what we have detailed have been experienced by themselves. Many of these witnesses, too, are individuals whose intellectual powers would not shrink from a comparison with those of their opponents. A similar testimony will be found to have been borne by numbers in every age, comprising in their ranks writers whose productions have justly been esteemed master-pieces of the human intellect.

On evidence so varied and ample, then, rests the proof of the efficacy of prayer in producing a great and marked change on the internal disposition of those who practise that duty. Let those who are conscious of no such change having passed upon themselves suspend, therefore, the thoughtless ridicule with which it is so easy to treat the subject, and awake ere it is too late, to the necessity of obtaining this important renovation of their moral and spiritual nature.

The process which we have thus attempted to delineate is variously termed in Scripture "a being born again," "a new creation," "a passing from darkness to light," "a renewing" of the soul, essentially requisite to fit it for a future state of happy existence. The slightest consideration must satisfy the candid

inquirer of the hopelessness of attempting in his own strength to effect so momentous a change. Happy are they who thus feel their own weakness; they will the better appreciate the value of that assistance which the Divine goodness has provided for them. The word of God, then, we may observe, assures us that the aid of the Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, is necessary to the attainment of this renovation of our fallen powers. Without him, we are informed, we are utterly helpless, while, assisted by him, the most formidable obstacles will in vain oppose our progress. This doctrine, like the other leading truths of the Christian system, has been made the subject of bitter opposition. Although, however, it may have occasionally been abused by impostors or enthusiasts, it will be found to be one in strict harmony with the deductions of all true philosophy. Were it contended that by means of this process new faculties were given to the soul, there might be more force in the objections that have been raised to the doctrine. All, however, that Scripture would lead us to believe on the subject is, that the mental powers already existing are readjusted, as it were, and their energies directed towards other objects. We are certainly as unable to account for the mode in which this effect is produced, as we are to explain the manner in which our bodies are nourished by their daily food. In both cases, however, experience establishes the fact. Be the mode of

operation, then, what it may, the effect is certain. After prayer the conscience is quickened. That power, in turn, chains down the passions which had so long acted as tyrannical masters. The passions being subdued, the judgment now unbiassed by them becomes clear. The affections, no longer unwilling to love a Being whose laws are at last obeyed, expand from the contracted range of earthly objects, to which they had before been confined, and centre themselves upon God and heavenly things. The various powers of the soul, now working in obedience to the voice of conscience, cease to act in opposition to each other, and move on in harmony and peace. The nature of this change, however, and the whole doctrine of the Holy Spirit's influence, are much more easily felt by experience than explained in theory. To those who would understand them aright, we would recommend earnest prayer for these unspeakably important gifts; then, as in answer to it, they find the conscience quickened, the judgment enlightened, the passions purified, the affections centered on proper objects, they will discover that they have been blind before, and recognise in the Holy Spirit one of the most inestimable blessings ever offered to the acceptance of mankind.

It has been, in these remarks, our endeavour to present the sceptical reader with a brief outline of the leading doctrines of the Christian system. We could have wished to

have enlarged more upon these truths, since in vain will the mind have been changed to a speculative belief in the evidences of Christianity, if the heart remains unconverted and unrenewed. As stated in our preface, however, this little volume was rather meant to operate as an inducement to the perusal of religious works, than to be itself a regular treatise on religion. Instead, then, of entering further into details, it appears a better course to recommend to the notice of our readers one of those productions to which the Almighty may, in a certain sense, be said to have given his sanction, from the extensive usefulness with which he has blessed them.

The treatise on "Practical Christianity," by the celebrated and justly eminent Wilberforce, seems particularly to fall within the scope of this recommendation. Considered simply as a piece of composition, it has not many equals in our language. The author has brought all his well-known powers as an orator to bear upon his subject. Eloquence, argument, and taste, lend their united fascinations, and chain the attention of the reader a willing captive to his pages. Produced at a period when the writer occupied a distinguished position in the legislative councils of the nation, the work powerfully attracted public attention, and elicited from men of the most opposite tastes and opinions, a burst of admiration and applause. Considered as an accession to theological literature it is entitled to scarcely less commendation. The subject

is treated in a manner which must convince, should it not convert the heart, while a spirit of the purest Christian love pervades it, which can scarcely fail to kindle a corresponding flame in the heart of the reader. With these remarks upon a work, to the perusal of which, under Divine Providence, the author conceives himself indebted for his possession of temporal, and his hopes of eternal happiness, he would bid his sceptical reader an affectionate farewell, in the humble hope that his feeble efforts may, through the Divine blessing, be instrumental in leading some unhappy wanderer back to the paths of peace from which he has strayed. He has felt the burden of scepticism, and but too well remembers the darkness, the misery, and wretchedness, which shed a gloom on the dreary path of Infidelity. Speaking in the name of his Christian friends, he would assure the unhappy votaries of scepticism, that, appalling as their situation is, it is not, however, hopeless. Many, like themselves, once apparently inextricably involved in guilt and sorrow, with minds bleeding with remorse, have been led to the feet of their Redeemer. They have found him true to all his promises. They are ready to bear witness that there is no master so kind, no yoke so easy, no burden so light. They have felt the power of prayer to impart the Holy Spirit's influence. They have known by experience its efficacy to raise to happiness and purity vicious and degraded natures. Having been themselves

exposed to danger, they cannot but feel deeply interested in the welfare of others, who are remaining wholly insensible to the tremendous peril of their position. By the awful prospect, therefore, of the judgment-seat of God; by the hopes of eternal happiness; by the terrors of everlasting wo, they would invite their fellow-sinners to turn to the cross of Christ, and listen, while there is yet time, to the accents of kindness which flow from their Redeemer's lips. "Come unto me ALL ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

CHAPTER IX.

“I have thought I am a creature of a day, passing through life, as an arrow through the air. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God; just hovering over the gulf; but a few moments hence, I am no more seen.—I drop into an unchangeable eternity! I want to know one thing—the way to heaven; how to land safe on that happy shore.”

JOHN WESLEY.

IN the opening chapter of this work, we depicted the sceptical mind as in vain struggling amidst the darkness of nature, to obtain a reply to the inquiries, “WHAT AM I?” “WHENCE CAME I?” “WHITHER DO I GO?” Though we may appear, as we advanced in our subject, to have lost sight of these queries, we have yet indirectly led our reader to that volume by which alone they can be answered, endeavouring at the same time to remove the obstacles and disarm the prejudices which would have prevented him from receiving a satisfactory solution of his difficulties. Although at this point, however, our address to the sceptic terminates, we may be permitted to apply the three questions which form the title of this volume to a different class of individuals—those whose lives are at variance with the precepts of religion, however orthodox and correct their systems of belief may

be. To all of us, indeed, these inquiries form a matter of momentous interest. In the bustle of life, in the whirl of dissipation, they may be forgotten, but in the season of solitude or affliction, conscience will again whisper them upon the ear. One period is at least fast approaching, when they will be forced upon our notice—the hour of death: then, when we roll, as it were, to the very brink of the precipice of eternity,—when we get a far look down the vast abyss that lies beneath us,—then, at least, if not before, must the soul inquire, “WHAT IT IS, WHENCE IT CAME, AND TO WHAT UNKNOWN REGIONS IT IS BOUND?”

Let us not leave, then, till the last moment, these solemn questions unanswered. Let us approach the unerring oracles of the living God, and listen with reverential attention to their clear and unambiguous responses. To the first inquiry, “WHAT AM I?” they reply, “An immortal being. Within you, you carry the mysterious seeds of a future existence, far more astonishing than language can portray. Your present life is but the dim and scarcely perceptible point from which the rays of the vast circle of eternity expand. Yet a little while, and a truth which now seems obscure, shall have been made plain; the grand secret shall have been discovered; heaven and hell found to be realities, and in one or other, thy condition unalterably fixed. Wisely, then, employ the passing time: thy moments are the seeds of ages; thy minutes, of cycles; thy

life itself, of a duration which no power of numbers can express." To the second inquiry, "WHENCE CAME I?" the same oracles respond, "From the hands of a pure, a holy, and a gracious God, who from the moment of thy birth hath poured upon thee an ever-increasing stream of bounties;—who created thee in his moral image; endowed thee with a mind of vast resources; powers of exquisite structure; faculties in grasp but a little lower than the angels, that thou mightest dedicate them to his service, and be rewarded in return by his love;—who gave thee thy being in that moment of time, and in that space of creation which his infinite wisdom saw fit, and who has laid before thee, (if true to thyself,) a destiny replete with glory, honour, and immortality;—more than all, who, when thou hadst wandered into the dreary paths of sin, sent the Son of his love to reclaim thee; and who has tried, and still tries, by unnumbered solicitations of affection, to win thee back to happiness and to himself."

To the third inquiry, "WHITHER DO I GO?" the reply is still more explicit. "To the judgment-seat of Christ, there to account for thy thoughts, thy words, thy actions, and for every talent thou possessest, whether natural or acquired. To this point all the paths of life, as to a common centre, tend. In this world there are, indeed, many paths. There is the path of ambition, with its slippery and its tortuous track, up which the statesman climbs. There are the paths of glory, along

which the conqueror urges his triumphal car. There are also more tranquil and delightful paths. There is the path of literature,—of science,—of peaceful contentment,—of rural quiet. There is, too, a straight and narrow path, along which a thinly-scattered band pursue their toiling way. Conspicuous over all, however, is the broad path of destruction, with its wide portals, its flowery border, its easy descent, down which, in pomp and splendour, the vast procession moves along, unconscious of the precipice that waits below. There are these and many other paths; but high or low, distinguished or obscure, broad or narrow, tortuous or straight, one common end they all have—the judgment-seat of Christ. Thither the universal concourse hastes. There he who reads and he who writes must alike appear, and there, and there alone, receive a full solution of the inquiries, ‘WHAT AM I?’ ‘WHENCE CAME I?’ ‘WHITHER DO I GO?’”

And is this solemn tribunal, then, the destination to which the human race is bound? It is easy to give to this question a credulous assent; equally easy also, to treat it with the sneer of sceptical ridicule, but it is another and a very different thing, to give to it that assent of the understanding which shall be followed by the efficacious belief of the heart. We would entreat such of our readers as have not already done so, to peruse with attention the previous chapter upon the resurrection of their Saviour, and to weigh well

the mass of evidence on which that keystone of the Christian system rests. We would solicit them, further, to remember in connexion with that momentous fact, that if their Saviour rose from the dead, he must have come from the other world, and must have known what was passing there; that he did not speak one thing and mean another; that he loved them too well to deceive them; and that his declarations, therefore, respecting their future existence ought to be listened to with the most solemn awe. He has lifted up, it is true, but partially, the curtain that veils eternity from our view; but the glimpse that he has given us of these unknown regions is sufficient to arrest the attention of the most thoughtless and inconsiderate. He has declared, in particular, that "the hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation; that he will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality—ETERNAL LIFE; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — INDIGNATION AND WRATH, TRIBULATION AND ANGUISH." Let the force of these affecting expressions sink deeply into every mind. The latter are, indeed, awful words; enough, as has been well said "to make the stoutest heart tremble."

Awful as they are, however, they are no less true. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words," said the Divine authority that uttered them, "shall *not* pass away."

Religion, then, is not a thing to be lightly neglected. Because multitudes are unconcerned about it, that will not in any degree lessen its importance. The resurrection of Christ, and his judgment-seat must still remain, whether they are thought upon or not, the most momentous of all truths. Oh! let not this warning, then, be despised. It is kindly meant, and deserves to be at least kindly received. If there be, therefore, any one who, as he glances over these pages, feels conscious that he has as yet omitted to prepare himself for the interview which he must so soon hold with the Judge of the universe, let him be entreated, let him be implored, now, from this very moment, to make the care of his eternal interests the one thing needful. Everlasting happiness or everlasting wo may be pending upon the mode in which this appeal is received. Let religion be made the subject of his calm and deliberate choice; let the cost be counted. There will, it cannot be denied, be difficulties to overcome and sacrifices to make; but one hour of eternal felicity may well outweigh them all. Even here, too, we repeat, consolations will be imparted a hundred fold beyond any privations which the call of duty may demand.

There is something, to a mind which has been awakened to serious reflection, agoniz-

ing and heart-rending in the spectacle of so many of its fellow-creatures whom it loves, remaining deaf to these appeals, and exposed to that torrent of Divine indignation which must finally sweep away the impenitent sinner. Let not this reflection be considered uncharitable. "The gate is narrow, the path is strait; few there be that find it: many shall seek to enter and shall not be able; it suffereth violence; the violent take it by force, and the righteous shall scarcely be saved." Such are the declarations of Scripture itself upon the subject—declarations so precise and definite that even Christian love, which hopeth all things, believeth all things, cannot conceal from itself the truth,—that if meaning is to be attached to words at all,—expressions such as these leave no hope to the careless and indifferent, so long as they continue in that appalling condition.

Oh! little do they know of the nature of a Christian's feelings who consider him uncharitable in pressing these warnings upon an unthinking world. Would that they who so hastily prefer this charge could read the secret workings of his heart! Would that they could understand the bitterness of that sorrow which overflows it, when on looking round he beholds involved in one common danger the friends of his youth, companions endeared by community of tastes, acquaintances with whom he shares the sweets of social intercourse, and, dearer objects still, those bound to his heart by the ties of relationship.

or love. In his retirement, they would behold him ever unwearied in devising new schemes of kindness to win their attention to that subject which *he* considers all-important. In company, they would trace him leading, by gentle and imperceptible gradations, the conversation to that point, or breathing for all beside him, aspirations which fall on no ear but that of God. They would notice, as he contemplates their danger, the tear at times ready to start unbidden from his eye, and would feel his heart yearning to embrace them, and compel them with affectionate violence, to haste into the spiritual ark before the waters have risen to spread gloom and desolation around. Would, above all, however, that the world could read the Christian's grief on discovering these disinterested exertions prove abortive, on finding his anxiety repaid by cold indifference, and his warnings met by the sneer and jest. Would that they could follow him to the solitude of his closet; that they could witness there his pent-up feelings seeking relief in tears; his sorrow taking refuge in wrestling intercessions with his God. Then would they understand the depth of his love; then would the scoffer be awed to silence, constrained to confess that the warnings given were faithful and just, and that the Christian's urgency sprang from no uncharitable feeling, but from strong and uncontrollable affection.

Under the influence of these anxious feelings, the author would now more particularly

address those private friends, for whose benefit this little treatise was originally designed, fresh in the recollection of many of them as must be the different sentiments which he at one time entertained. Of these friends, indeed, he rejoices to remember there are some who do not now require to be urged to accept of their Saviour's invitations, closed as they have done with his proffer of mercy, and evincing as they do by a life productive of the fruits of Christian faith, the reality of that change which has passed upon them. May he be permitted however, to urge even these to fresh exertions, in leading others to participate in that happiness to which they have themselves been admitted. In their hands Christ has reposed the sacred trust of conducting to his feet, friends as yet unquickened to spiritual life. Carry, then, to your gracious Lord the objects for whom your affectionate solicitude is excited. He is Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." The love which glowed within his breast towards the children of men, when eighteen centuries ago he trod the streets of Jerusalem, still animates his bosom. Cling with fresh ardour to his feet. Plead with more earnestness his promises. Persevere with redoubled ardour, until at last your faith is crowned by victory, and you behold the objects of your love exchange the pallid hue of spiritual death, for the bloom and beauty of the life of heaven.

There is another class, however, amongst

the author's circle of friends, respecting whom, desirous as he is to entertain the most favourable hopes, painful fears will at times intrude. He alludes, it will perhaps have already been anticipated, to those who, however amiable in their dispositions and useful in their lives, as well as observant of the external forms of religion, yet do not exhibit in their tempers and conduct that transforming process, which is the peculiar mark of those upon whose hearts the Holy Spirit has begun savingly to operate. The author would entreat such friends to peruse the texts of Scripture given below, and then candidly to ask themselves, whether they are conscious of a change, answering in magnitude to the force of the expressions, having passed upon themselves? "Unless a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new." "The Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." These passages are but a selection from a multitude of others upon the same subject; they are amply sufficient, however, for the present purpose. The language in which they are clothed is precise and determinate; so strongly and so clearly marked, indeed, that nothing but wilful self-deception, it is to be feared, can prevent us from deciding, whether or not they represent our own spiritual condition. To put the matter, however, to another test, let

the class of readers whom we now address be persuaded to compare themselves with the law of God, and to examine how far they habitually endeavour to act up to the requisitions of that elevated standard. What is the state of their love towards God, towards Christ, towards the Holy Spirit? Are they conscious of entertaining any affection to these objects, or are their feelings cold and dead? How stands their zeal in God's cause? What efforts are they making to extend his kingdom? What exertions to awaken their fellow-sinners? Is the name of their Creator revered? Is it associated with feelings of gratitude and love, and does the profanation of it infuse grief into the soul, and render them anxious meekly to reprove the offender? Does the Sabbath witness the sincerity of their devotions, the warmth of their intercessions, their diligence in self-examination, their delight in the courts of God, the occupation of their leisure in offices of love? Do they discharge the parental, the filial, and the social duties with a single eye to God's glory? If free from more open acts of violence or revenge, yet have they put on the gentle spirit of Christ? Are they slow to anger? Little apt to resent injuries? Patient under affronts? Habitually imitating the long-suffering of the Saviour? Do they study to be temperate and self-denying, even in the lawful pleasures of life, retrenching upon their own comforts and superfluities to provide for the wants of more indigent brethren? Are they conscientious in small as

well as great matters, and is it their sincere endeavour upon all occasions to obey the inward monitor, however difficult to flesh and blood? Is Christ their constant pattern for imitation, and do they trace a gradual conformity to his image? Do they study God's glory in every action, small or great? Do they feel their best actions to be defiled by the presence of sin? and where the world would praise their performances, do they endeavour to loathe themselves in self-abhorrence? Above all, do they look with simple reliance to Christ for acceptance, do they feel the worthlessness of their best actions, and continually seek by faith and repentance, to have the countless imperfections of their holiest deeds washed away?

Such are but a few of the characteristics which, according to the word of God, mark the disposition of his children, in strong contradistinction to those who have but a barren profession, "and a name to live." On the friends above alluded to, the author would affectionately urge the reception of these truths. He would entreat them not to evade by dishonest sophistry the force of the questions above enumerated. He would implore them rather to allow them to sink deep into the heart; to determine to know the worst of the case; to repair in earnest to the Great Physician; to solicit from him in fervent prayer that eye-salve which he can alone impart; to be discouraged by no difficulties, but to persevere in their application to that source, until from the heart they can exclaim,

“One thing I know—that whereas I was blind, now I see.”

There is a third, however, and, alas! a still more numerous class of the author's friends, for whom he cannot help entertaining solicitous apprehensions — those who will themselves admit that they are wholly indifferent to the claims of religion, and whose state is so emphatically described in Scripture, as a life “without God in the world.” What preparations, alas! are these making for the solemn tribunal to which they are with such fatal swiftness hurrying on? If even the Christian feels that the unremitting exertions of a whole life are not more than sufficient to make his “calling and election sure,” by what new process are they to accomplish the same results, without labour, anxiety, or reflection? If the Christian, too, who, more than any other, surely, might be supposed entitled to rely on the mercy of God, would tremble out of Christ to approach him, as being then a “consuming fire,” how shall those who have never made one attempt to please that Being, throw themselves so confidently on his love? Above all, if the Christian who sedulously cultivates every talent; who numbers his words as being recorded; who scrutinizes his thoughts as being tried in the balance of the sanctuary; who buys back his lost time, exchanging freely for that precious Jewel the pleasures which the world counts so dear; who views his money, be it large or small, as a stewardship; who considers influence, education, abilities, ad-

dress, health, connexion, every thing, indeed, which constitutes usefulness, as so many goods to be diligently improved; if even he, we repeat, would shrink with horror at the thought of venturing his eternal interests on the merits of an innocent or well-spent life, how shall they rest so strongly on this plea, whose existence has been but one melancholy record of life spent without an aim, of countless opportunities neglected, and inestimable talents perverted? What account shall they give of their words, whose expressions have been full of idle frivolity, if not of profaneness and impurity? Of their thoughts, when they would often blush to have them exposed to a fellow-creature? Of their time, when not one hour, perhaps, has been spent in preparation for eternity? Of their wealth, when, if not wasted on self-indulgence, or hoarded with selfishness, it has been withheld from the cause of its rightful Owner? What account shall they give of God's Word, to whom it has been an unopened volume? Of his Sabbath, when it has been consumed in sinful pleasure? Of his sacraments, when they have been neglected? Of the Son of his love, when he has been despised? Of his Holy Spirit, when it has been quenched? Oh, be persuaded to awaken from this frightful position! and let the language of an inspired apostle ring, before it be too late, its thrilling alarm upon the soul. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be counted worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the

blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?"

If there be any one amongst the unhappy number whom we have been describing, whose conscience urges upon him the reception of this warning, we would beseech him to yield to its dictates, and implore him not to delay till another season the convictions that may now be pressing themselves upon him. His interests in eternity may be decided by the mode in which he receives this appeal. Let him be entreated to put what we have written to the test of God's Word, above all, to the test of prayer. Let him retire to his closet. Let him realize the presence of his long-slighted Saviour; let him cling to his feet, and there, with wrestling fervour, implore the gift of the Holy Spirit. The laws of matter will not more certainly operate, than will his petition be granted. Conscience will speak; oh! let its whisperings be heard. It is through that medium that the Gracious Spirit acts. Let its warnings be listened to. If it rise with gloom, recalling a long life spent in sin, still let not the soul despair. Let it throw itself unreservedly upon the Saviour, as willing and able to save it to the uttermost. Let it depend entirely upon the Holy Spirit, for strength to overcome every difficulty. Let it determine to do the will of God, cost what sacrifices it may; but let it implore its Heavenly Father, at the same time, to lead it on from strength to strength, till each obstacle, however formidable, is sub-

dued. Happy, oh happy, beyond all language to utter, are they who thus seek. Soon, in answer to their earnest prayer, shall they find the day-star of hope arise in their hearts, the night of darkness give way to cloudless skies, and in due season the Sun of Righteousness himself arise with warmth, and light, and effulgence, upon their souls.

It is time, however, to draw these extended observations to a close. Affection has, we trust, dictated our remarks, and in a kindred spirit we beseech them to be received. The oracles of the living God have thus shown us WHAT WE ARE; more indistinctly, perhaps, WHENCE WE CAME; but with noon-day clearness, WHITHER WE DO GO. Soon, however, shall each reader have these questions answered, by finding himself at the close of life's brief voyage. Silently, but surely, the current of life bears us along upon its tide. With many that tide has begun to quicken. Faintly, in the distance, may be heard the roar of the rapids, which we must so soon approach. Let us hasten, then, into the ark of Christ. Once safely within its shelter, we shall hear unmoved the thunder of the cataract; we shall glide peacefully through its boiling and its troubled waters; and safely emerging from the whirling eddy, float calmly along into the still and peaceful haven of eternal rest.



